Climbing The Rigging And Counting Bloody Dreams (Never Quite There)

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Rating:
Teen And Up Audiences

Archive Warnings:
Graphic Depictions Of Violence, No Archive Warnings Apply, Major Character Death

Category:
Gen

Fandom:
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Relationships:
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Midoriya Izuku, Class 1-A & Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Class 1-A, Izuku & Aizawa's Capture Weapon, Midoriya Izuku & Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic

Additional Tags:
Midoriya Izuku is So Done, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead is So Done, Time Loop, I don't know what needs to be tagged as graphic violence so here we are, Hurt Midoriya Izuku, Hurt Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Character Death, but it is a loop so, Blood and Injury, Canon-Typical Violence, but like recent canon, Angst, Unreliable Narrator, Married Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Angst with a Happy Ending, Hurt/Comfort, Mostly hurt, Protective Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Protective Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead Loves His Students, Aizawa is Best Dad, Smart Midoriya Izuku, USJ Timeloop, Shared Timeloop, NWA Fic Fight Team 1-A, Recovery, traumatised Midoriya Izuku, but he has so much support from everyone-, now also lots of comfort for the hurt

Language:
English

Series:
Part 61 of Ota's One-Shot Wonders, Part 64 of Ota's BNHA Fic Stuff,

Part 16 of Fics From The Trenches (ⓘ ω ⓘ *), Part 1 of Counting The Days (Since We Refused To Break), Part 3 of Ota's Medium + Multichapter Fics

Collections:

Fic Fight 2021, Aizawa and Izuku Mentor-Parent Fics, DerangedDeceiver's Favorite Fics, Fics that give me *ideas*, Mori's Favorite BNHA Fics!, Dadzawa protects the Green Bean!💙, Best Fics I've ever Read, MHA Time Shenanigans, Bug's Fav MHA Fics, Izuku Angst (aka Give Izuku a Hug Challenge), Izuku's Dads, ☆ Little Red's BNHA Library ☆, A Picky Vest's Favorites, Amazing Reads and Inspiration for BNHA, Supreme Bnha, Must Read BNHA Awesomeness!, soul healing comes from fanfiction, Feeeeelings, ✧Chris's Best Izuku Fics✧, Top Tier Reads To Munch On, fuckin a, Flashfreeze Recs, You haven't lived if you haven't read this, finished works I'm in love with, aizawa and problem child, Darkside_Dreamer's_Completed_Favorites, Fics to read again, Don't forget, the reason i'm an insomniac, Dadzawa and Izuku, Absolute Favorites, BNHA_Incomplete_Fics, Lex's Favorite BNHA Fics ٩(●˙▿˙●)۶, Finished, late night reads, Timeless Time Travel Fics, Best Adoption Fics, The Good Bnha Fics, Dadzawa Gives Me All the Feels!, my personal stash of good bnha shit, Izuku Midoriya (because I like him and he deserves more), The best fics, mha coolios!, time-loops! time-loops! time-loops! (read like mulaney's mcdonald's chant), God-Tier Short Fics and Oneshots, Tia's BNHA OGs and Good Reads, flofli's collection of read mha fics <3, Creative Chaos Discord Recs

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Climbing The Rigging And Counting Bloody Dreams (Never Quite There)

by Otaku6337

Summary

The USJ attack is awful and traumatic, and it goes worse than anyone could have predicted.

But then it happens again, and again, and again, with Izuku and Aizawa caught right in the bloody, cycling centre of it.

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Regardless, he needs to think now. Because yesterday was a carbon copy of the day before, excluding a few little conversation changes like people asking if he was okay and then things that changed because of his own actions, but Aizawa-sensei still died and then he threw himself in front of Asui and died, and then everything went black and he woke up to his All Might alarm again and-

And Izuku doesn't know what to do.

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They both move the few inches to squeeze their hands together then, feeling the bloodstains that aren't there right now, but, more than that, feeling the body heat-warmth and knowing that the other is alive, present, with them. Right now, for a few moments, they're okay.

Notes

This is for Alex's "timeloop" prompt!! I started it right near the

beginning of fic fight, couldn't really vibe with it, then suddenly managed to get super into it this weekend ^^; I really hope you like it, and are prepared for the angst!!

Oh, and a repeated warning from the tags - this does contain repeated scenes of death and grievous injury. It also holds one maybe six-word allusion to suicide at the very end. Please look after yourselves!

See the end of the work for more notes

Insanity

Chapter Summary

> "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." - misattributed to Albert Einstein.

Eraserhead strains to lift his head just one more time, Quirk flaring in heated pinpricks that have him wanting to flinch away from his own eyes, but he *needs* to save them, to protect his kids-

"You're so cool, Eraserhead. Nomu-" The next few seconds are a blur, a mess of heat-haze and iron-bile at the back of his throat, every inch of his heart and mind and body screaming, but then there's something heavy on his head, pressure and pain and *pleasenoIcan'tdie-notherenotnow-thekidsHizashi-nonono* before everything just *stops*.

Aizawa blinks gritty eyes open, struggling to breathe from the pressure on his throat, and Twig meows her fishy breath right in his face. What the fuck?

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Izuku watches his hero, their teacher, as the creature, the Nomu, bursts forward again, swinging a massive fist down and Izuku will *never* forget the sound it makes when bones shatter and fracture, shards scattering, blood and hair and something pale spattering alongside and it's- it's wet and messy and Izuku feels bile rising in his
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throat even as he takes a shaky step forwards, Quirk sparking to life in a red-hot agony through his bones, and every part of him feels like acid.

"Oops." The nonchalance of that single word, the idle glee, has Izuku shuddering and, before he can do so much as think about it, he's throwing himself forwards, a hoarse, cracking cry heralding his punch. Sparking lines of red and white and green flare around him, and Shigaraki whips around. The hand over his face does nothing to hide the maniacal grin, skin flaking pink and grey around the edges, red eyes more terrifying than Kaachan's have ever managed to be, and in tandem with his punch hitting something, shoulder or ribs or arm, he can't tell in the blur of the moment-

A hand brushes against Izuku's chest. It trails up to his throat as Shigaraki twists away from the rest of his punch, still staggering under the first catch of the hit, but then all Izuku knows is that his top is sticking to him, clinging with wet heat, and he's full of numb static, the stench of iron-heat clogging his nose and throat, eyes wide. The last thing he sees is those *eyes,* a brighter red than Aizawa-sensei's blood, and then everything stops.

The first thing Izuku sees is the face of All Might, grinning down at him, and the man's voice ringing a morning wake-up in his ears, not quite overwhelming the wet cracking of a skull that he can almost feel with how it echoes through his mind. What- what just happened?

It must have been a dream, he tells himself, and that becomes his mantra for the morning. He gets dressed with no less than twenty repetitions of it, brushes his teeth with six, and manages to force himself to eat half of his breakfast with thirty four. He nearly throws up when he sees someone hurrying along in the street with a nosebleed, tissues clutched to it and red-drenched, and he has to stop, because he vaguely remembers them and the faint scent of iron that

had hit him except now it only reminds him of a crushed skull and he- he can't- *It was a dream.* It was a dream, a nightmare, and it was fiction brought about by his own fucked up head, not anything real, and all he has to do is remind himself of this fact another twelve times as he crosses the street and walks three buildings down for the train station. He puts his headphones on when the familiar conversations become too much *("-had to take her to the vet because-"* she ate some twigs *"-she ate some twigs." "Oh, the poor thing. Was-"* Nanaka-chan *"-Nanaka-chan too upset?" "Not really, thank heavens. With Hiro away-")* and is glad for the ability to drown much of the world out, his own head included. He bypasses his more recent playlists, not interested in their upbeat optimism, and instead goes back for his heavier, darker junior high school music. They're more depressing, or rather depressed, which isn't exactly a good way to keep him going on a bad day but, by the same token, the idea of something cheery about dreams and goals and friends, right now, just sounds like something that would make him want to punch someone. Maybe himself.

So Izuku gives himself a headache with loud music, attracts a few askance glances because the volume surely has the music filtering out into the train car a bit, and nearly stumbles when he steps over onto the platform. Once again- No, no, *this* morning he isn't meeting up with Uraraka and Iida because he'd left earlier so that he could eat breakfast with his Mum before her early shift that will have started by now, so he keeps his headphones on, shoulders up and head low, as he weaves through the crowds of workers and students and everyone else, blinking in the sunlight of the streets, and hurries. Nothing seems different to yeste- to his dream, but he pushes that aside in favour of trying to ignore how he's apparently losing his mind. It can't be some sort of omniscience Quirk, surely, because it certainly isn't his and he can't think of a single instance where he might have been hit by anyone elses' Quirk, villain, civilian or otherwise. There's no logical explanation for it, so surely there's no explanation full stop. It must have been a dream. It *was.*

Homeroom is almost exactly the same. Aizawa-sensei looks maybe a little more tired, a bit more strained, but also seeing him alive and walking and talking feels almost foreign to Izuku after the dream, so maybe that's just his memory twisting and turning. He knows the morning lessons word for word, every syllable another bell in the cacophony of his headache, and Uraraka asks if he's feeling alright in

a way she hadn't yeste- in the dream, but Izuku isn't feeling alright, unlike in the dream, so it's not that weird. And that one difference, minor though it might be, is enough to have him relaxing a little. Surely this one small change will be the butterfly effect he needs for everything to prove completely different and they'll go to the USJ facility or maybe somewhere else entirely and have all three of their teachers and exactly zero villains there, and he'll be able to enjoy rescuing dummies from the shipwreck zone rather than being pulled out of the path of a shark-Quirked villain by Asui's tongue-

Izuku's luck isn't that good. No, it doesn't take long for him to be stood upon the entrance plateau once again, watching his teachers sign about All Might having already run out of time for the day, and then there's a looming shadow growing in the central plaza.

Aizawa-sensei notes it what might be a few seconds earlier than last time, yanking his goggles down and shouting at them all, but it's too late by the time his instructions are over with: the portals have formed. Izuku loses himself into cold water once again, and this time he knows which direction to start moving in, so that Asui's tongue doesn't have to reach quite so far but he hates, hates, *hates,* that he knows that, so he's cursing himself even as he's spitting up water on the deck of the sinking boat.

He doesn't dare change anything himself then. They go with the same plan, and once more it works, whilst Izuku refuses to think about his previous da- dream, doesn't want to, because what can he do? Well for now, the obvious answer is that he can run towards the plaza, Asui and Mineta a step behind. Aizawa-sensei can once again stop Shigaraki from disintegrating Asui's face and the villain can order the Nomu to crush Aizawa-sensei's skull and Izuku- Izuku can, for the second but not the final time, run forward, screaming inside-out with rage and pain and fear because he doesn't understand-

And he can die in the blazing pain of Quirked touch, where his eyes go first but the rest of him is quick to follow.

And he can wake up to an All Might alarm once more.

Somehow more existential horror creeps in during the third loop than the second - because that's what they are, loops - and Izuku dies even sooner. He falls into cold water, already flailing this time because he'd tried to dodge the portal but failed, and the shark villain is closer than before.

Izuku hadn't realised how pretty blood looks when it blooms and blots through water.

It's the fourth loop when Izuku first realises that something is different. Because he arrives at school, desperately trying to keep his coherency together, to find All Might being dragged along by Aizawa-sensei, the blond still in his small form, and the look on Aizawa-sensei's face is dark. Dangerous. It's roiling thunderclouds and the rippling of Nomu skin, a promise of harm to come, and yet somehow Izuku doesn't shudder at the sight of it. It would be hard to feel threatened by Aizawa-sensei now, when Izuku has seen that expression adopted to protect him and his classmates, when Izuku knows it must come from a place of fierce concern and fear. It's an ugly expression, but the sentiment behind it is kind. That's enough for him.

Regardless, he needs to think now. Because yesterday was a carbon copy of the day before and then the day before that, excluding a few little conversation changes like people asking if he was okay and then things that changed because of his own actions, but Aizawa-sensei still died and then he threw himself in front of Asui and died, or charged after the man killing his Sensei and died, and then everything went black and he woke up to his All Might alarm again and-

And Izuku still doesn't know what to do.

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Aizawa doesn't know what to do. How to make sure his kids live. What he *does* know is that deja vu doesn't work like this, accurate to every single word and action and moment barring incredibly minor details that, frankly, he could have just forgotten, but something is still blatantly wrong. And he's honestly scared for his students. Aizawa's reaction to fear has always been action, and that translates very quickly into him tracking All Might down. He's resorted to bodily pulling the man to UA as soon as possible, ambushing him in between incidents that are all close to UA and physically dragging him along, ignoring any protests and questions with what he knows must be a stormy expression, because he needs to try and make sure the buffoon has every minute of his strong form possible.

It's not enough. Of course, of *fucking course,* it's not enough, because All Might only has forty minutes of his time left, and it's a twenty-five minute drive to the USJ because it's too fucking far from the main campus, and by the time the kids have been greeted, loaded onto and then off the bus, and Aizawa is scanning the training centre for something, anything, a hint of hanging bruises in the air or pale hands reaching for them, the number one hero has ten minutes left at most.

And then the villains are there, and the Nomu is immediately
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rocketing towards All Might, even as the students are lost, scattered amongst portals once again because that fucking monster is blocking Aizawa's view of the warp villain, and he wants to scream, to strangle someone, but it's not going to work, he knows. So he warns All Might to be careful - words about it's possible multi-Quirked nature get stuck in his throat, but that must be terror, surely - before ducking around that burgeoning fight and heading down to try and deal with the crowds in the plaza.

He's tired, from his bones to his brain to the very trembling tips of his fingers, but he whirls and kicks and elbows anyway, capture weapon writhing in a near-perfect prediction of every blow, and in any other situation such an easy fight would have him fiercely relieved, proud of his skills. Right now though, the fourth time he's fought this same steep-sided battle, it has hollow aches ringing through his bones, the phantom strikes of repetitions past, whilst he takes them down quicker than ever. He half-dodges the brunt of the Nomu that All Might just managed to punch in *his* direction, not given time to try and talk, to stall, because even just being clipped by a dark elbow has him having to catch himself, anchoring in place with loops of his capture weapon lashing out against the fountain, and struggling to regain his punched-out breath. Fuck. That's a few ribs broken already.

But a few ribs are nothing in comparison to the lives of his students, so Aizawa turns his gaze upon Shigaraki, Quirk not yet activated, and bursts forward, capture weapon flaring.

His student is already there.

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Izuku ducks below the warp gate, hoping desperately that Tsuyu and
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Mineta will survive without him, and races after his teacher, past All Might and the Nomu. His Sensei has died every *single* time and he, he can't let it happen again-

His Quirk feels weird, but not wrong, and there are supernova sparks skimming through the air, the scent of burning metal like his skin is welding the very air around him, ozone-rich, his bones are creaking but not shattering under his own weight let alone his punches, and then he's rushing forwards, comet-crashing into Shigaraki. There's blood and cracks and something wet and iron-sour splattering over Izuku's shoulder, but it doesn't matter in comparison to the fact that Shigaraki can't choke a single word out. Can't command the Nomu, for all that it's already fighting All Might.

Although apparently he *can* manoeuvre a hand to catch Izuku's side, just above his hip, but the static-numb pain of it is relatively easy to push past if only due to his rapidly-mounting familiarity with it, and Izuku promptly jabs an elbow into the villain's side and push himself away, gasping. He- He hasn't died yet. Such a realisation shouldn't feel like more of a victory than anything else, but it does, and then Aizawa-sensei is there too, eyes flaring red and capture weapon whipping forwards,

"Shigaraki Tomura, a student has escaped." *Fuck*. No, no, the portal guy - Kurogiri, Izuku distantly remembers - is the last thing they need right now, when some sort of victory is actually in sight.

"What?" The gasp is low and angry, even as Shigaraki steps backwards into a portal that has him appearing at Kurogiri's side, out of their reach for the moment.
"Fucking NPC brats. Cheatcode-users, the lot of them." His voice is deeper than usual, raspier, and he wipes some of the blood off of his chin before scratching at his neck, those red eyes glaring over the plaza.

Izuku can't help how he shudders.

Nor can he help the fact that, mere moments later, he doesn't dodge

the fist the flies at his face. Because All Might was still fighting the Nomu, but Kurogiri's attention is upon all of them now, and the last thing Izuku knows is a familiar, bare-knuckled hand flying into his face, neck snapping back, nose crunching with a grind of cartilage and flood of blood down his throat, and then he's gone.

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Aizawa probably screams then, a deep thing that tears at his throat, and races forward in time to catch his student. The kid is warm, bloody, but his head is wrong, face caving in and neck completely snapped, judging by the unnatural angles and protrusions of barely-under-skin bones.

Logic is hard to maintain in moments like this, emotions raging, warring within his chest in whirlpools and whiplashes, and the hero sinks carefully to his knees, laying the kid- the kid's body on the dirty floor, and he sways back to his feet, not even thinking as he pulls his knife from its sheath, revelling in the familiar weight of something he rarely needs to use, and steps around Midoriya.

"Not so cool now, hey Eraserhead?" He has no response for that, no need for words, and instead he begins to move forwards, slow measured steps that aren't enough to prompt Kurogiri to use his Quirk, and Aizawa doesn't know it, but the few students watching on in horror almost flinch because there's an aura to him, a thundercloud-heavy malice that settles around his shoulders, and it becomes all too obvious that their teacher *is* a hero but, more than that, that he's underground, used to death and dirty tactics, and that he is terrifying in his own right. In fact, for those watching on, the presence of Eraserhead is far more bone-rattling than All Might's horrified standstill.

But then Aizawa is lunging those final few metres forwards, eyes
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glowing the same colour as the blood spattered over his cheeks, knife raised high, and just as he plunges the blade into Shigaraki's neck, not even blinking against the arc of red that spatters against his chest, there's something massive and hulking crashing into his back, taking him down atop the villain in a mutual crushing of bones and grinding of cartilage. Something that might just be a beak meets the back of his head, and-

He's blinking awake, Twig laying across his chest and throat once more. This time though, for all that he wants to scream with grief, horror-struck and furious with himself, the villains, this must-be-a-loop he's caught in, there are two glimmers of hope: his husband's arms are wrapped around him, warm, grounding, and the awareness that he just might not be alone in this mess. Although he still wishes it wasn't a student, for everyone's sake.

Reluctance to bring a child deeper into this mess is nothing in the face of knowing that he can't leave Midoriya *alone* in said mess, yet when he finds the kid at school earlier than any other days, both of them walking the corridors - Aizawa headed for the records room, the teen perhaps for the faculty room, judging by direction and proximity - and both faltering, hesitating, freezing in place at the sight of each other. The air is suddenly Atlas-heavy.

Izuku, for his part, is entirely willing to follow the man when, after a few moments, Aizawa-sensei jerks his head, promptly leading them to some sort of small meeting room, one with comfortable sofas around a coffee table rather than anything more stuffy and formal.

"The room's private, so don't worry about our conversation being interrupted or overheard." Those words, on the surface, mean almost exactly nothing, and Izuku immediately understands why: his teacher is being cautious. They've noticed each other, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're *right* about their assumptions-

"Kid, do you know what's going to be happening today?" That's almost enough. Almost.

"Do *you*, Eraserhead?" The word choice is equally as careful, as deliberate, as the hero's had been, and it leaves them with an an unspoken tension afterwards, something that might just be understanding, but Izuku doesn't feel safe, hasn't felt safe in days-today-ever, and he doesn't dare to trust it-

"Things might fall apart." Measured, careful words, ones with an undercurrent of need. Desperation. Izuku wishes that he couldn't relate, even as he selects his own words, taking that final leap they both need,

"They could disintegrate."

They know. They both know. They're looping *together*.

However, this knowledge doesn't fix anything. Not that loop.

They don't leave that room for at least twenty minutes, just long enough to confirm that they share the same basic patterns - this is their fifth loops, they've both died every time at the USJ - and to try and hash out some very preliminary plans. Of course, the very first thing that they try, the first of their joint plans, is to get more people involved. Their timing is more than limited, considering that they only have the rest of the morning and obligations for a large part of that, but now that they can be sure that they're looping, and looping together at that, it only makes sense to see what they can change together, and if there could be anybody else looping with them as well.

They got to Nedzu. It's Aizawa's suggestion, his first instinct upon finding his kid headed for the faculty room at too-early in the morning, because the rat has both the most intelligence and the most resources out of anyone the man knows, let alone has easy access to. So it's with grim faces and steps that put them slightly too close to each other for how they've been before today that the pair make their way up to the creature's office, knocking.

"Come in, Shouta-kun, Midoriya-kun!" It's a polite call, casual, and none of it matches how they feel. But the hero, for one, is used to acting beyond his own comfort zone, and he pushes the door open, gesturing Izuku through first because he can admit that he really doesn't want to let the kid out of his sight right now. Who knows if the kid's the specific target for some reason?

"Nedzu," he greets, nigh-on toneless, yet there's something in those beady eyes anyway, a certain awareness. Aizawa doesn't dare to hope just yet.

"P-Principal."

"A good morning to you both!" Well, fuck, it's not really, but Aizawa can't snap that in the way he wants to. Not when his Problem Child needs a calm, steady role model to feel safe with.
"Might I enquire as to your wonderful presence in my office this morning?"

"There's a problem." Seems like a safe enough start. And Nedzu does lean forward a little, steepling his paws,

"Oh?"

"Yeh," he grunts, and opens his mouth again, ready to spill everything in as succinct and accurate a detail as possible-
"Problem Child needs extra Quirk counselling."

That is *not* what he was gong to say. Not a single word of that was true- well, actually, it *was,* and it's something he had been intending to talk to the teen about before the first USJ happened, but why the hell did he say that just now?

"No!" The kid's outburst startles them both, as much as they can be startled, and their joint attention has Midoriya sinking into himself slightly, fidgeting with the hem of his blazer. But when he opens his mouth to speak again, Aizawa can almost see the words evaporating upon his lips, and then other matters spring forth in lieu of the intended truth,
"I just- I thought I could do with the extra help? I don't need to have them if it's an inconvenience or anything-"

"Not to worry, Midoriya-kun! I'm sure we can organise something for you," Nedzu offers, a genial close-lipped smile upon his furry face, not baring his sharp teeth. And in any other circumstances, Aizawa would be glad for this conversation and the technically-positive outcome, but right now he can't be.

No, all he can do is feel his heart drop right to the floor in sea-glass-sharp shards, and grip the arms of his seat with white knuckles. What are they going to do?

The answer is that they retreat to the 1-A classroom, safe in the knowledge that Iida still won't be arriving for another fifteen minutes, and they sit down, Midoriya at his desk and Aizawa taking Bakugou's seat, folding his arms over the back. The teen is the first one to break the silence, something guttural and shattering in his tone,

"I couldn't say it. Like, physically just couldn't."

"Nor could I. Logically, there must be something restricting us." He waits a breath, weighing his own thoughts and words, wanting to give the kid some level of hope however not willing to go for anything that might be false hope,
"But there may be some loopholes."

"Loopholes, of course!" Midoriya instantly rushes to pull a notebook, pencil case and his phone out of his bag, spreading them over his desk, and hands a pen to his teacher, flipping to the back of the book.

"So we should try writing it down, typing it, and maybe recording

ourselves saying it? See if any of them work. Oh, or signing it!" Silently approving of the range of ideas that the kid had been so quick to come up with, Aizawa nods, and sets to trying out writing whilst Midoriya unlocks his phone and attempts typing out their situation.

The characters he writes aren't the ones he thinks of. Instead of *"we're stuck in a timeloop",* other idle thoughts form on the paper, no matter how many times he tries. *"The kid has good ideas." "I hope Hizashi made onigiri for lunch." "The kids had better not blow up too many things in homeroom today."* They're all things that he would have been thinking regardless, if this exact scenario was translated into a normal day - several of them are things that he *did* think on the first run-through, in fact - but right now there couldn't be anything more frustrating. His fingers aren't obeying him. For someone used to being in immaculate control of his own body, that realisation is quietly terrifying.

He can't show that though, not in front of Midoriya, so he bites his tongue for a few breaths, then unclenches his jaw to look the kid in the eyes.

"Writing doesn't work."

"Neither- neither does typing." They move swiftly on from there, both trying to record messages on the phone to no avail, followed by the unfortunate discovery that they can't communicate it through sign language either, not as fingerspelling or full words.

They're alone, well and truly.

But they do have each other still, so in the last few minutes they have, Izuku gives Aizawa his phone number and address for the hero to memorise, and vice versa. At break time, the teacher texts Izuku with a location, a building several floors high but with a fire escape the whole way up, that is situated relatively well in between their respective homes and UA. A meet-up place for their next morning.

At least that afternoon, when they lose themselves to one of Kurogiri's portals and the Nomu's fists respectively, they have a plan for the beginning of the next day.

Izuku leaves his house just before his Mum on the sixth morning. He doesn't often get to eat with her, and he almost wants to feel bad for having rushed them both through the meal, but he can't truly care in comparison to even another minute of planning with Aizawa-sensei that might let them all survive today's USJ.

He runs the whole way to the meet-up building, uncaring for any odd glances he might get on the way, head ducked low and shoulders caught around his ears, not willing to look at anyone in case they remind him of things to come. Instead, he focuses on heading in the right direction, idly acknowledging that he could have taken his usual train several stops to get here but with his current pace it's not too much different than lingering amongst the crowds. And at least moving, working his muscles to a degree, is grounding, bones juddering with every step, the weight of his own whole-limbed body dragging him down in a comforting way. It affirms the fact that he really is alive.

Climbing up the fire escape isn't quite as grounding. Having air all around him is a little too reminiscent of being thrown head-first into the fountain, because the fifth loop had been just as awful as the rest, however the ringing of metal is a good noise, almost unfamiliar. New. It's enough to keep his breathing steady as he half-jogs up. Izuku still can't quite help how he huffs a sigh at the sight of a dark figure sitting on the opposite edge of the roof he is now standing beside. Good, Aizawa-sensei's here. Yesterday- yesterday's realisation wasn't a fluke.

"Hey, kid." The soft words almost make him jump, but instead he only finds a tiny smile, relief seeping deeper through his bones, unfurling in gentle waves akin to blossoms because thank *Kami* he isn't alone anymore.

"H-hi Sensei."

"Come sit down. We've got long enough to get our minds working." And so they do. Aizawa is pleasantly surprised to find that his Problem Child of a student is more than sharp-minded. Indeed, he's got a good grasp of analysis and strategy, the sort of thing that would have Aizawa ringing up Nedzu under other circumstances, and they bounce the beginnings of ideas off of each other, threaded through with picking apart the Quirks of the three main villains, not to mention their relative dispositions and personalities. They know what to exploit - Nomu's reliance upon orders, Shigaraki's impulsivity, Kurogiri's deference - and how to try and bypass or combat Quirks - prediction of portals, preventing five finger contact - but there's a lingering weight to it all. Their knowledge of the Nomu, beyond its physical mutations and obvious enhancements, is limited. Severely so. Parsing out any other potential Quirks is going to be essential. It's a shame neither of them had the time nor attention span to watch All Might fighting the creature on the fourth loop, really. But what's done is done, and it was neither a dream nor the end, so it's not going to do them any good to linger upon it beyond the productive element.

For now, their first true plan is to try and avoid bloodshed at all. Delaying the class' arrival might just be what they need for the villains to either leave before the rest of them arrive, or for them all to be just arriving, and therefore maybe only halfway through the doors and with a good chance of getting at least a portion of the class out. Anything to limit injuries. And Aizawa has already been able to message Thirteen requesting the other hero to meet the class from outside the USJ rather than inside it.

Several hours later though, the man is telling his students to get changed into their hero costumes - a non-negotiable this time - and settling against the side of their bus to wait. Aizawa never thought that he would regret instilling efficient changing times into one of his classes from their very first day, but fuck he almost wishes he hadn't now. If the kids had taken fifteen minutes to get changed, rather than

seven, it would have been that tiny bit of extra time that might have allowed them to get there late enough for something to be *different.*

But no, they get changed as quickly as the teacher would ever usually hope for from a fresh batch of first years, and are all happily chattering and bouncing along as they arrive at the car park in little clumps of threes and fours. Aizawa, not quite willing to sigh at them for technically not doing anything wrong, makes do with shoving his hands in his pockets, slouching even further so as to tuck more of his developing scowl in his capture weapon,

"We're going to wait ten minutes to see if a final member of staff who is also supposed to attend will be able to." It's a good excuse, a reasonable one, but several of the class complain, only subdued by a fierce glare from their teacher, and everyone continues scuffing their feet and chatting amongst themselves.

But then the intercom above them crackles into life:

"Aizawa-sensei, your third staff member will not be joining you." Izuku, frantic, checks his watch - it's only been two minutes. Two minutes isn't enough. Nowhere near. And he can see, upon looking up at Aizawa-sensei, the faintest glimmer of much the same fear in the man's dark gaze, yet it disappears within a breath.

"We'll be going then, hellspawn." If there's petulance or worry or frustration warring through the man's chest like it is Izuku's, then none of it comes across his tone, and everything is lost to a rush of Iida trying to organise them for the buses, and neither Aizawa nor Izuku are inclined to correct him pre-emptively. At least the uproar is another precious few minutes.

None of it is enough.

No, barely over half an hour later they're all tumbling through portals or rushing forwards or freezing up. Izuku doesn't try to twist out of the way of his portal, not really wanting to leave Asui with only Mineta, and they make quick work of their escape this time, his apparent calm

going a long way to drawing their plan together quickly, with not even the little pervert complaining half so much as the first loop around. It's with that pace and seeming clarity that Izuku bursts forwards onto the plaza, content that Asui and Mineta have agreed to go around the areas in order to try and round up more of the class. Rushing forwards, despite the edges of a plan rapidly developing in his head, perhaps isn't the best route, maybe he should have tried to negotiate or at least stall with Shigaraki, rather than exchanging several blows with him in an effort to stop the villain from commanding Nomu any more. Because now he has at least three static-buzzing patches of disintegration numbing his right arm and left shoulder, but it's worth it for the fact that Aizawa-sensei is still alive, even if the teen is having to step back a little for a few moments, exchanging a wary pause with Shigaraki.

It's like this that Izuku, sopping wet and still trying to breathe around the water clinging to his lungs, folds a fist together but sways, stance ready as he watches on with hazy eyes. Shigaraki is running at him, for him, and-

There's a glancing palm strike to his shoulder, one that he just about manages to twist away from the worst of and that is made useless by a red-eyed glare anyway, and he just about manages to twist further, one leg coming up to crash a knee into Shigaraki's side. However, right as the villain stumbles away, hunching over himself, Izuku is staggering, ankle turning beneath him and breaths shuddering in his throat. Aizawa-sensei is too far away to do anything, and Izuku tumbles to the ground, bruising and straining, and he's too slow to dodge the foot that stomps at him, crushing at his hand - things crack and creak, and Izuku hates how familiar the sounds of shattering bones is - and he chokes back a whimper, even whilst he tries to roll away.

"If the rogues are so determined to protect each other - Nomu, break Eraserhead's limbs!" Izuku can't help the gasp that scratches its way up his throat, clawing lung-to-lips, and he tries, he *tries,* to get to his feet, limbs scrambling and scrabbling and then he's up, he's moving, but Aizawa-sensei is already breaking apart, arm snapping louder than Izuku's scream. He- he needs to be faster, needs to be stronger, he

needs to be *more,* and he can feel his Quirk flaring through him, acid in his marrow and ozone replacing his blood, gaseous and heated, in response.

Izuku ignores how his skin is purpling, how he can barely feel his limbs because they're dissolving with every step but then he's reaching the Nomu, and his Sensei is so still, so silent, and all Izuku wants is for his teacher to be okay but Izuku can't do anything, not really. His Quirk is melting him down, inside-out, his bones shattering, molten, agonising and angry and oh-so awful, because he can feel every part of his limbs literally breaking, far worse than the entrance exam, and he's screaming or yelling but there might not actually be any noise at all because he's too busy trying to hit the Nomu with limbs that are destroying themselves and he tries to punch, tries to strike-

Somehow he manages to move, but his hit, for all of its supernova strength, evaporates to nothing upon clashing with the Nomu's elbow.

It does *nothing*.

Izuku collapses. His bones aren't really bones any more, just shards tearing him apart from the inside, and he wants to scream, wants to cry, but instead he can only loll his head to the side, and meet the dark eyes of his teacher.

It's the last thing he sees *(widening, terrified, a cry of his name upon bloody lips-)* before there's an instant of white-out pain, everything below his neck numb and gone, and then everything goes black again.

His All Might alarm is overwhelmed by one single thought: the Nomu has an absorption Quirk.

Seven used to be Izuku's favourite number, but he quite possibly has never hated it more. He's running, Quirk flaring and sparking around him in waves of presence that have him stumbling, ebbs and flows of power, but he keeps on running regardless. He *hates* knowing that there's an attack going on behind his back, absolutely loathes that he isn't directly helping Aizawa-sensei and Thirteen and his classmates like he should be, but Izuku is also very aware that he has the most knowledge of the situation, barring Aizawa himself of course, and that he's one of the fastest in the class when this new facet of his Quirk actually deems to be useful. He's definitely not going to hesitate to get whatever help he can, that's for sure. Nor argue with anyone about whether or not he should go.

And so it's with a mantra of "just get help" circling through his mind, whipping into a cyclone-frenzy, that Izuku runs as fast as he can. Logically, he knows that it's probably only been a few minutes, yet there's a mounting *feeling* within his chest. It's found in a pressure upon his throat, bile-acidic, and in iron bars settling into a cage for his heart and lungs, constrictive and cruel. Cold. It makes it hard to breathe, even whilst he forces himself to heave air in through his nose and out of his mouth, trying to go for stamina as well as speed because if he overuses his Quirk or just plain old overexerts himself before at least getting somewhere that he can easily get attention of teachers, then he's going to have a problem. A big enough problem that it might cost them the entire loop.

Finally, after far too long of pushing away the panic, the main campus buildings come into sight, the central H-shaped building standing tall and proud, gleaming in the sunlight, and the sight of it all has something in his chest unspooling in loops of red twine fading into gold, bright and untarnished because thank *Kami,* he might actually-

There's an odd moment of suspension. Stagnation. Izuku is mid-step, still breathing heavily, Quirk caught in frozen spirals of sparks around his skin, and yet he isn't moving. No blinking, no breathing, and no getting help. He doesn't get the chance to so much as try and figure out what the the fuck is happening then, because suddenly everything is fading, giving way, a pervading shadow falling around him, sinking right down into his bones, fatal, and then he's blinking awake again.

All Might is above him. Not living, breathing he's-my-mentor All Might though, oh no. This is the poster on his bedroom ceiling, with his alarm blaring in his ears in a way that's almost loud enough to drown out the absolute war-drum beating of his heart, and Izuku is already scrambling to his feet to grab his phone. He- he's *sure* he didn't die then, except he clearly looped anyway and there has to be a reason for it. An explanation. The only other person that might have any chance of explaining in - had he travelled too far, was it another part of them not telling people about the loop, perhaps it was something back at the USJ itself - is Aizawa-sensei and by now, seven loops in, it would be impossible not to have memorised the man's number straight off the top of his head.

Aizawa had died. Only a few minutes after Izuku escaped, in fact. Or so the almost immediate reply reports, followed by a request for them to meet up on their usual roof. So they must be looping together in every sense of the words then, albeit with a slight delay. Izuku doesn't blame himself for the few frustrated tears he lets free at that realisation.

The eighth loop is simple, old-fashioned bad luck: Izuku slips.

The next thing Aizawa knows, the Nomu is upon his student, fist crashing down, and then there's red and grey and white and the hero can't think, can't breathe, surging forwards- Moments later, he follows his kid.

Twig yawns fishy breath right in his face once more.

The plan, the intention, was for Izuku to go down into the support labs to beg, borrow or pilfer anything possible that could be useful, and mostly for damaging their bus to the point of not being able to travel. Their first attempt at delaying hadn't worked, but trying it again in a slightly more extreme version is worth a try. After all, not going to the USJ at all would be preferable, particularly if they can derail the entire trip at just the right timing for Thirteen to leave prior to the class' scheduled arrival, but also not too early. They can't risk a replacement bus being provided unless it will still significantly delay the entire process.

And it's fine, *Izuku* is fine. He's been thinking through what sort of things he might try to get - explosives are the first thing that comes to mind, but that's perhaps a bit excessive in comparison to some tools for visibly messing up the engine or tyres or just *something*.

Yet when he gets halfway there, taking a few different turns to usual upon entering the main campus building so as to head for the Support wing, Izuku finds himself blinking heavily once, twice, and then he's

walking along a different corridor.

He immediately freezes in place, eyes wide and fingers finding his elbows, twisting into the fabric of his blazer, as he struggles to breathe for several long moments, pushing back awful cries and bloody spatters from his mind because he's still safe, he just- he just doesn't know where he is or how he got here or- A particular poster on one wall catches his attention. It's a flyer for an art club, and it has a blue paint blob along the bottom edge, which is exactly the same as the one that had been on his left only a minute or two ago, except now it's on his right and he knows, oh Izuku knows, that none of the other art club posters in the school are likely to have paint marring them, let alone that exact shade of blue in that precise pattern. Which means that he's in the same corridor, he's just been turned around.

Determined to confirm his theory, if only to keep himself somewhat calm, Izuku hurries to the nearest windows that are studded along part of the wall, the tall sheets of glass letting light flood in, and there's the distant sound of voices, maybe a chair scraping back, and he can see the edges of the main courtyard, most of it blocked out by trees, and there's the sakura tree with the benches around it, and the water fountain perpendicular to the path, and it's unquestionably the windows he just walked past.

Okay. That knowledge definitely helps, and Izuku forces himself to focus on every single detail, willing to spend another minute here just to keep himself on an almost even keel, not thinking too much about anything except for the fact that he's alive and intact right now, no injuries or dead teachers or dead classmates, and he is still safe for the moment. It helps.

Yet apparently it isn't truly enough because by the time he starts walking again, retracing his path back towards the staffroom as quickly as he dares, and dreading a possible moment of getting turned around again, and by the time he turns a corner to see Aizawa-sensei ahead, his breathing is growing back into the erratic territory, fingers tugging slightly too harshly at his hands and sleeve hems. He doesn't miss how the man's eyebrows furrow slightly at the sight of him, nor

how Aizawa quickens his own pace a tad, hands coming up as though to take a gentle hold of Izuku's arms or shoulders. The sight of him barely helps though.

"Aizawa-sensei, I can't-" He tries to dial back the sheer panic in his voice, because this isn't truly so very urgent, except it is, because this could be their chance, the loop where they change things and he doesn't want to be the reason that they all die again-

"Kid?" Dammit, the blatant worry there is too much, more than Izuku has received from any single adult in a long time, and he barely knows how to handle it.

What he does know how to handle though, is panic, and he wrestles it back like he always does, sucking in one, two, three deep breaths, fingers twisting together again,

"I-" he pauses, lowers his tone just below what would be easily decipherable,
"I couldn't go somewhere different. I tried to go over to Support to get some weapons, or something to damage the bus with, but I *couldn't."*

"You couldn't?" There's faint horror in Aizawa's voice then, overlaid by frustration, but somehow Izuku can tell that none of it is directed at him, so it isn't too hard to reply,

"No, I just-" That, of course, is the moment that the warning bell chimes out, because fuck their luck, and they freeze, staring at each other.

"Take this. I've got a meeting at break that I can't get out of without Nedzu trying to find me in the cameras," Aizawa murmurs, urgent, and reaches behind him, unclipping his knife and its sheath, pressing it into the teen's hands.
"Do what you can with it."

"Yes, Sensei."

They part ways then, going their separate routes, and Izuku slips the sheathed knife into the inside pocket of his blazer. He doesn't want to

put it in his bag, although it's heavy enough to have his blazer hanging slightly crooked, but tucking the ends of the sleeves against the palms of his hands with curled fingers is easy enough, and helps make the overall shape less noticeable. Or, well, gives an obvious and reasonable reason for it. And, in his head, he begins to plan again. During break time, the last few loops, he's already been excusing himself to the bathroom to freak out in solitude, too aware of the impending clock of his own death, not to mention that of his friends and teacher and other classmates, but this time he's not going to have a meltdown. No, he's going to excuse himself in exactly the same way as every time previous, and he's going to rouse exactly zero suspicion, and he's going to slash the bus's tyres. He knows that if he gets caught, during or after the event, Aizawa-sensei will make sure he doesn't get expelled, the man has promised as much, and even if he did it would be worth it. If he can save even one of his class, it will be worth it.

Astonishingly, it works.

Izuku leaves casually enough for the bathroom, slips into the vents for ease of movement and less chance of being caught out, and he travels as fast as he can to the bus. It's parked in the same lot as before, ready for them to leave in only a few hours, and there's a grim satisfaction to stabbing every wheel, and then on ducking under the body of the vehicle and going at a few of the wires, making sure that they hang down obviously enough to be seen by whoever tries to change the wheels, just for good measure. Knowing UA, they might have quite a few spare wheels hanging about, and whilst they'd undoubtedly have the materials needed in the Support department to fix most issues that didn't require specific parts, the more time-consuming things are to deal with, the higher the likelihood of his class being safe.

Sure that he's done good enough of a job, Izuku shimmies back out from underneath the bus, dusts himself off whilst replacing the knife into his blazer, and then pulls himself back up into the vents, popping out into the thankfully-empty corridor by the boys' bathroom, darting inside to wash his hands and make sure there aren't any obvious dust or grease marks or the like.

Then he returns to class, spins a tale about having stopped for a while to talk to Midnight about if they study the Creation Revolution, makes sure that the damp edge of his sleeve is obvious to reinforce the overall alibi, and proceeds to spend the next two hours pretending that he isn't tearing himself apart from the inside. What if the bus gets fixed quickly? Or they just get loaded up into cars, or even have to walk? Okay, it won't be the last one because it's a twenty-five minute drive minimum as-is, which means that walking it would take even longer, but what if they get sent to a different training centre and the League still show up? There are too many factors, too many possibilities and unknowns, all of them too much for Izuku not be working himself up over.

Aizawa walking in to the classroom at the end of lunch, looking perfectly normal, is a massive reassurance. Meeting those dark eyes allows Izuku to calm himself even just a little bit, one hand creeping up to settle over his heart, and therefore over the knife still tucked into his blazer pocket. If Aizawa-sensei doesn't seem to bothered, things must be going to plan so far, Izuku is sure.

And they really are. The class get changed, all of them asked to this time, Aizawa-sensei not giving them the option like he had in the first two loops, and join their teacher to walk out to the small car park. And find a bus that looks too low from a distance, and that has ruined tyres visible from up close, slashed deep and wide. The kids, of course, start to chatter, but Aizawa is determined to keep up their façade, so he orders the students to stay back, and creeps forward himself, one hand in his capture weapon. For all that he knows this was Izuku's doing, there's no risk of the teacher *not* being careful, both for the sake of any cameras and for the kids behind him. Plus caution eats up time.

It's with this in mind that he circles the bus, crouching from a distance to check that there isn't anybody underneath, and he has to force himself not to grin, Cheshire feral, at the sight of several ruined cables underneath the bus. Clever kid.

Satisfied from outside, he starts assessing what he can see through the windows, to which the answer is not a lot, even though this is one of

the on-campus buses that doesn't have tinted windows and, just as Aizawa is about to kick the bus door in and have a look, there's a rumble in the near-distance, and he backs up a bit, casting most of his attention to the car park entrance. He doesn't have to wait long to get to watch the second on-campus bus pull in, and there's a fair chance Aizawa could punch something, or several somethings, right now. The third year class isn't due back for another *hour*. Why the actual fuck are they here already? This is going to ruin everything, because Izuku had done a bloody good job of making sure that 1-A's bus wouldn't be drivable within a fair few hours, and they were all going to be delayed and it was going to save their fucking lives but no, that isn't going to happen apparently. What a waste of a fucking loop.

Dammit, he can't think like that. It's illogical. Writing off an entire loop - an entire time that Izuku and himself will have to die, not to mention the other kids, whether they remember or not - is just impetuous, a disservice to what Izuku's managed to do already, because prevaricating by ten minutes might just be enough, even if it's not the same as an hour or more.

Stepping back, away from the slashed-tyre bus, Aizawa raises an arm to the now-parking bus. Snipe is already making haste out of said bus, out the door the minute it's stationary, and waves a hand in turn.

"Y'alright?" The underground hero can only shrug, expression tightening slightly,

"Some f- Some idiots slashed the tyres on ours. Looks like some of the wiring underneath is gone too."

"Darn," the other man mutters, leaning over to look around Aizawa and at the undercarriage, whistling quietly.
"Ya don' say."

"Don't suppose yours is in better condition?" It's almost a joke, albeit a deadpan one, and the familiar brand of humour has Snipe relaxing a tiny bit,

"Might be some crumbs a' the back."

"My hellspawn will survive that," Aizawa grumbles, and winces internally at his own poor choice of words, turning around to face his kids. The apprehension on Izuku's face - the genuine fear in his eyes - twists at the hero's heart, but he can't let it show on his face so he keeps as neutral as possible.

"We're using the other bus!" His call has them all exchanging glances before starting to come over, giving their original bus a wide berth. Aizawa can't blame them.

"You're back early," he comments to Snipe, mostly idle,

"Gotta fracture, an' didn' wan'tah leave her with i' much longer."

"Fair," the underground hero grunts, even as he lets most of his attention settle upon the third years pouring off of their bus, all in their costumes, and how his own class are lingering just to the side, talking lowly with lots of side glances to the destroyed bus. And fair play to Problem Child, the kid isn't looking particularly shifty at all. No, he just looks apprehensive, but Aizawa knows this kid, and he knows how to read people overall: a lot of that apprehension is put on, or rather emphasised.

"Talk to Nedzu for me?" It's not a particularly true request, but it's the logical one he would be making under normal circumstances, and deviating too much would only seem odd. And not favourably so.

"Sure," Snipe acquiesces, no hesitation at all, and Aizawa almost wants to drag the other man along to the USJ with him. But he doesn't have a good excuse for it, and nobody has a free period right now. He knows because he checked. Four times.

None of that is feasible though, so he loads his kids into the second bus, Izuku filtering in last so that he can drop the man's knife back in his hand without anyone else noticing, and then they're off. Aizawa doesn't miss that Izuku settles even nearer the front this time than any of the previous ones, clearly on edge. And to be fair, none of the kids seem happy per se, and it's understandable. The immediate reaction to

the media break-in had been much the same after all.

Unfortunately, no amount of discomfort is apparently enough for the class to be less at risk. Or rather, the slight delays, together with the kids being a bit more hesitant, do add up to them only just being through the doors when Kurogiri's portal first forms, Thirteen and Aizawa not even having had the All Might discussion yet, and the underground hero wastes no time,

"Iida, take Kaminari and get out *now!"* His roar, so different to his usual tone, startles the students into action and Iida does scoop up the blond, before zooming out of the door just in time for it to snap shut behind him. Good. At least that means that help will be far sooner to arrive.

"Thirteen, protect the rest! Class, hold on to each other, we don't know the abilities of that portal user!" It's the first thing that comes to mind, one of their more simple strategies for trying to mitigate the damage done to their numbers and panic by Kurogiri's ability to dump them all in random places.

Perhaps it's because some of the kids are already going to get help, or something else entirely, but the villain's plan seems to change slightly.

"Nomu, get the escaped brats!" Aizawa feels like he's been dumped straight in ice water, and he whips around, capture weapon flaring for where he's sure the Nomu is about to be, and he knows that he won't be enough to stop the abomination himself, but he just might be able to-

Aizawa is flying forwards then, more or less able to control his own trajectory, and he has his knife in one hand even as he rockets, feet first, onto the Nomu's shoulders, bending his knees to both absorb the impact and to get him closer so that he can bury his knife hilt-deep into the thing's brain. It roars, writhes beneath him, and the man is bucked off, only just catching himself in a forward roll barely kept neat by decades of muscle memory. He staggers to his feet at the end of it, capture weapon flaring around his head, half-paying attention to the crowd of his students that he can see on the opposite of the monster, but a fair bit of his focus is tied to the Nomu and its death

throes, thrashing upon the floor with ever-less frantic movements, blood pooling around its grotesque head.

Then it falls still. Dead.

In this time, Izuku has charged down to begin dealing with the plaza grunts, despite Thirteen's apparent alarm. Aizawa allows himself a single second longer to watch on with something like pride blooming beneath his collarbone, warm and gentle and such a contrast to everything he is growing to associate with the USJ and this date *(the eleventh of April has never had any particular significance before now but dammit Aizawa could just tear every clock and calendar that he sees apart, bitter-sharp reminders of what an awful reality he and his kid are trapped in),* before he flings himself onwards as well. The ferrous tackiness of the blood already trying to seep through his jumpsuit means nothing when he can block a blow aimed at his Problem Child's back, already-bloody knife catching someone's kneecap with brutal accuracy, and then they're fighting in earnest, twirling and ducking and jumping at each other's sides.

It doesn't last though, not truly. A rasping voice calls across the plaza, above the general din, and everyone freezes, Izuku and Aizawa included: Hagakure is being held by Shigaraki.

"You wouldn't want one of your precious students dead, right Eraserhead?" There's so much fucking arrogance to those words, mocking and malicious, but Nedzu-dammit the bastard isn't wrong, so Aizawa stays still, watching on, Quirk inactivated for now.

"What do you want with us?"

"I *want* the stupid symbol of peace. But he isn't here, so I've got to make do with a side quest instead. If you don't want this one's HP in the negative," he tightens his three-finger-one-thumb grip, yanking Hagakure's head back and her thrashing stills, a whimper piercing the stagnant air instead. And Aizawa- he doesn't know what to do.

Well, no, he does, so he lifts his hands slightly, expression set.

"Get your portal guy to put her back with the rest, and don't replace her with another student. You can have me."

"But you aren't my side quest!" Shigaraki growls, and his fingers tighten. All of them.

Hagakure's jaw is lost to the wind, and there's a morbid amusement to the fact that the dust of her body is visible, even though she herself isn't, and then her clothes are on the ground, still retaining the shape but none of the movement that, whilst technically only having known her for less than a week, Aizawa has come to expect. She's gone.

Clinging to logic is all that keeps him from charging forwards then, and he shoots an arm out to latch a hand upon Izuku's forearm, keeping the kid in place, but he can't do much for the several other kids that have just shoved their ways forwards, piling down the stairs and past Thirteen with a clamour of Quirks and alarmed shouts - at least half of them stop once they get close enough to see that Hagakure is completely still.

"Kids, stay back," he demands, voice strong and unyielding, and every one of the students falters, the most headstrong included. It's of no use though, not when Kurogiri simply raises a barely-formed hand and then half of them are falling, the other half remaining, and a second person drops straight into Shigaraki's hands - Sero, this time - and by the time Aizawa's Quirk is focused on the pair it's too little, too late, and he doesn't even have time to curse himself before both he and Izuku are rushing forwards, moving in tandem for Kurogiri because it's his portals that are allowing such careless fucking slaughter-

Capture weapon coils snap into place around the metal of the villain, yanking him forwards in nigh-on perfect timing for how Izuku leaps forward, spinning into a kick that reminds Aizawa vaguely of his own fighting style, but neither of them have time to think much more about that because the green-sparking leg is crashing into Kurogiri's chest armour and there's an odd clanging noise to the strike, hollow yet a solid thump, and Kurogiri... he wavers, fluctuates in a way that suggests flinching or stepping backwards, and he seems disorientated.

There's no chance for satisfaction though, let alone celebration, because there's a scream, guttural and terrified, from behind them, and the pair whip around to find Shigaraki looming over a fallen Uraraka, who looks simultaneously furious and terrified, clutching a very-much bloody arm from her place on the ground, a grimacing scowl making itself known. Izuku and Aizawa are moving before they can even think about it.

That, it turns out, was maybe not the ideal choice, because Izuku, with his Quirk boosting him forwards, does manage to get in between Shigaraki and Uraraka for the next blow, and Aizawa-sensei flares his Erasure into blazing life, but Shigaraki's blow to Izuku's solar plexus is still a vicious one. Enough so that the greenette stumbles backwards, tripping right over Uraraka's half-prone form, and then Aizawa is having to send out loops of his support gear, trying desperately to restrain the villain, because his Erasure isn't going to last forever. Not when his eyes are already burning so fiercely.

For a minute, it's enough. A combination of ever-more coils of capture weapon and ten seconds intervals of his Quirk - not too straining, and not entirely predictable when he switches it up by a few seconds each time - keep Shigaraki occupied for just about a sufficient amount of time for Izuku to regain his footing, admittedly a bit winded, and usher Uraraka away, handing her off to a shaking Mina and Kaminari.

"Todoroki, Kaachan, could you-" Izuku is frankly loathe to bring anyone else up against Shigaraki, let alone Kurogiri as well who is almost certainly somewhat recovered by now, but he fears that he and Aizawa-sensei might just need the help. The back-up. Two people against three villains is a big ask, and they're flagging as a result. Or, well, he is anyway.

At first, bringing them in proves to be a good decision, because ice snakes across the plaza, frosting the downed grunts to the ground, another layer of discouragement for any of those vaguely conscious to try getting back up, and then it snaps into a spiky second skin over Kurogiri. Kaachan blasts forward, snarling viciously with an unfamiliar light in his eyes, and is able to land a solid kick across Shigaraki's head that has the villain staggering despite the rigidity of

Aizawa-sensei's restraints on him.

However, things inevitably go wrong. Drastically so.

The first problem is that Shigaraki apparently manages to disintegrate just the right piece of capture weapon - or wrong piece, really - which means that when Bakugou swings around for another blow, the villain lashes an arm up, into the air, and manages to grab the blond's ankle. Izuku doesn't think he'll ever forget the noise of Kaachan actually howling in pain, thrashing to get his explosions underneath himself, and he manages, blasting them enough at Shigaraki's face and arm to make the man let go, but his leg has already flaked to perhaps half of its previous musculature, the spider-web twisting of the wound stretching from ankle to knee. It's *awful.* And none of them could do anything without having caught Kaachan in the crossfire.

The second problem is that, whilst the four of them are summarily distracted with that situation, Kurogiri disappears from view entirely, leaving his ice prison an empty husk, apparently largely recovered from Izuku's earlier hit. And his freedom only becomes obvious when it's already too late: Aizawa is falling, caught between two different portals in a loop that isn't endless, not when he lashes his capture weapon out quickly enough to pull himself out from between them, however it is long enough for Shigaraki to dart forwards and grab onto Izuku, inches of flesh and muscle and perhaps some bone disintegrating from his shoulder and bicep. Twisting out of the hold is a good idea on the surface.

Except it takes Izuku straight into the pathway of the ice spears Todoroki has just jutted out of the ground to stab Shigaraki with. Something so cold and damp stabbing him through the leg and chest is a very odd sensation, Izuku has to say, particularly when the objects seem to get slightly smaller within moments, and he can't really think or see or process anything except for the fact that Shigaraki is laughing, a thing of nightmares and Grimm fairy tales, almost hysterical cackling drier than dust and twice as choking.

Oddly, it feels like hearing that laugh kills him more than the ice puncturing right through his body.

After that loop, one where there had been so many moments of almost-hope, of almost-there, the twelfth morning arrives, accompanied by yet another truth of their reality that cannot be questioned or ignored anymore. It sombres the note of their morning meeting even more than usual, and they certainly haven't been joyous occasions in the first place.

In fact, Izuku is already at their rooftop when Aizawa arrives, with his notebook in hand and muttering subdued by a bitten lip. That fact is a little bit worrying because Aizawa doesn't like to see the kid with a raw lip, regardless of the reason, but it's also sort of logical, so he doesn't reprimand him yet. No, it can wait until- until they're out of these Nedzu-damnable loops.

"Morning." He may or may not have his capture weapon at the ready in case he startles the teen too badly, but Izuku only looks over his shoulder and manages a very much wan smile. The hero nods in return, knowing that his expression has probably settled into a soft sort of not-scowl that he can't help because this is his kid. And sure, some of that is probably trauma bonding, but *also,* Izuku is clever and kind and incredibly determined. It's hard not to like him.

It's with this lingering in his mind that he sobers though, shoving a nutrient pack into the kid's hands and sitting down, almost shoulder to shoulder, so that he can glance to get an idea for what the teen's noting down. And yep, not a surprise:

"These loops are more problematic than we initially thought." It's not a fun conversation starter but Izuku doesn't falter, only stabbing the straw into his pack and taking a deep draw of it before replying,

"Restrictive. We definitely can't deviate far from our original pathways, although there's more leniency in timings than locations, one of us dying still ends the loop, and we very much can't tell anyone else."

"Sounds right," Aizawa intones,
"Shit."

"Shit," Izuku returns, nodding, and he can't even smile when he gets bopped on the head for the language, the man's free hand settling on the stone ledge between them afterwards.

Able to tell that Izuku really won't be cheering up right now, and undoubtedly relating to that fact, Aizawa heaves an even deeper breath, feeling a veil of iron and silk settling about his shoulders.

"These loops, they're rigged against us. They're meant to break us."
The pair both pause once more, the enormity of their limited reality crashing upon them with tidal strength,
"So what are we going to do, kid?" Izuku hesitates for a breath, before steeling himself, looking up at his hero with fire in his eyes and hands gripping the edge of the roof with bone-bleached knuckles,

"Not break?" He gets something caught between a fond smile and a Cheshire grin for that, the hero nodding affirmation,

"Not break."

They both move the meagre few inches to squeeze their hands together then, feeling the bloodstains that aren't there right now, but, more than that, feeling the body heat-warmth and knowing that the other is alive, present, and *with* them. Right now, for a few moments, they're okay.

But then it's lunch time and then they're on the bus and Izuku feels nauseous and he blinks before they're *there*. They're offloading, the

rest of the class are chattering and laughing because they don't know what's coming, and the greenette can feel worried eyes catching on him yet he can't bring himself to meet them. No, instead of that he draws himself together again, lengthening the lines of his shoulders, tilting his head back to look straight ahead, and pieces a smile together out of the shards of his fear when Uraraka starts talking to him. He nods along, dredges up some level of enthusiasm for the appearance of Thirteen, all whilst edging to the side of the class, ready.

It starts with Aizawa-sensei whipping around, goggles in place and capture weapon rising, and Izuku pours his Quirk through his limbs to bound forward beside the hero. They know to target the Nomu's brain now - they'd theorised it in previous loops, but the eleventh was their first chance, intentional or not, to actually be able to try the tactic - and so Izuku already has Aizawa's knife in hand, unsheathed from the man's belt as he passed by him, and before Shigaraki can say a word, there are burning eyes and a capture weapon focused on him, and Izuku is blurring past in a flash of green. The Nomu doesn't have time to react to any orders prior to there being a blade deep in its brain, Izuku gasping and shuddering as he lands, legs purpling whilst he staggers away from the falling monster. His Quirk has been odd this whole time, sometimes sinking into every bone but sometimes focusing in specific limbs, and he managed to use it as the former but he can tell that parts of his legs, all ankles and shins and hips, are now strained at best. But he can still move, can still fight-

A small part of Aizawa has the energy and attention to be proud of how quickly and efficiently Izuku just took out the Nomu, but the rest of him is about ready to freak out, because the kid is close to the Nomu and it's still in its death-throes, but he can't spare a single loop of capture weapon unless he wants Shigaraki to get him-

Fuck, that isn't even a question. He gets to witness the truly *delightful* moment that his support gear falls slightly too short, and the thrashing of the dying Nomu has one of those giant limbs crashing into this kid, sending him flying backwards with a cut-off cry, hoarse and startled. Then he's lying amongst the fountain, his own body cratering into the red and yellow concrete, and there's water

everywhere that reminds Aizawa of a rainy day, and there's a broken body with fluffy hair left discarded, ragdoll-ruptured, amongst the rubble, and the kid's hair, under bright light, could almost be blue around the edges. It's a sight that hurts to be party to, a visceral ache worse than being stabbed in the chest, something that Aizawa would call himself rather qualified to judge with his record of no less than five chest stabs in his career.

But then the morbid thoughts are lost to a hand upon his back, and the feeling of his eyes burning. He isn't using his Quirk.

The thirteenth loop is perhaps the worst so far. Overall anyway. It starts badly, their plan for Izuku to push Iida right out of the USJ thwarted by Kurogiri spotting the movement, warping Iida into a wall instead, Shigaraki laughing from the plaza below, a sick, creaking cackle that still has shivers down Izuku's spine, even after hearing it so many times. And it only gets worse from there.

The near-escape has Shigaraki demanding that several of the class are brought down to the plaza. Neither Izuku nor Aizawa get down there quickly enough, let alone passed all of the grunts, to stop Mina from dropping right into the Nomu's hands, nor Kirishima's Hardening failing under the creature's strength, and by the time the hero looks at Shigaraki, holding Yaoyorozu by the throat, it's too late. All of it's too late. Three of the kids dead within perhaps twenty, thirty seconds, too many skipped heartbeats to be able to count it.

Aizawa goes next, dodging in front of Izuku at both the wrong and the right moment: he's mid-blink, no chance of erasing Shigaraki's Quirk, and he deflects the first hand with his arm, dust and blood weighing heavy in the air, but he doesn't get the chance to stop the hand

heading straight for his face, and for all of his training to repress it over the years, he still flinches just enough for Quirked fingers to settle around the edges of his face. Izuku catches him, unable to look but not willing to let him fall disgracefully to the ground, and dies when he crouches to lay his Sensei down, a dry hand over the back of his neck.

It's the fourteenth day when Izuku cannot drag himself out of bed. He wonders, with distant thoughts and idle fingers tracing invisible bloodstain-rims upon his All Might bedsheets, if perhaps the attack will go differently if he's not there. If maybe his presence is what fucks things up. *(His Sensei, his anchor and rock and beacon, lax and blood-dripping in his arms; Yaoyorozu with nothing but half-gone flesh to breathe with, a quarter-breath of wet rattles her final inch of life; Mina and Kirishima screaming and fracturing and gone, gone gone-)* If *he* is what kills his teacher and classmates and-

Instead, he gets Aizawa-sensei bursting in through his bedroom window an hour into the school day, wide eyes frantic and capture weapon writhing. Izuku startles, but still can't muster the energy to really react beyond that, because at least Aizawa-sensei is safe. And still alive. Snorting at that thought definitely isn't a good idea, nor a good sign, but Izuku can't help it and then he's laughing, hysterical and cracking against the sharp edges of his tongue and lips. By the time Aizawa-sensei is crouching beside his bed, Izuku is already dissolving into sobs, every single one bubbling in his throat with an acid-sting and breathless gasps, it's all too *much*-

He barely registers the low, urgent words being murmured right by his ear,

"I thought they'd taken y- taken you out early, kid. Fuck," Aizawa rasps, and the sound echoes through Izuku's chest with a visceral ache,

"I thought you were gone somehow-"

"Sss-ss-sorry," he manages, the syllables slipping and sliding, bile-slick upon his tongue, but at least it prompts a rough, trembling hand to bury itself in his hair, callused fingertips pressing against his scalp, and Izuku leans into it, tilting back into the touch despite how it makes breathing even harder again.

"Don't be kid, fuck, none of this is your fault, alright? None of it. You're being so strong, so brave, I promise that I'll get us out of this loop as soon as I can. I swear it, kiddo." Izuku- Izuku isn't sure if he can believe his hero, but dammit he *wants* to, so he lets himself sink into the affection and the promise and simply cries.

They spend at least an hour like that, although eventually they actually end up with Aizawa sitting against the head of Izuku's bed, and the kid curled into his side, clutching the hand that is offered up to him, rhythmically counting the hero's fingers with gentle tugs, repetitive one-two-three-four-fives that keep him more or less settled.

"We-" his voice fractures again, grinding through his throat with nothing but jagged-edge aches,
"We promised no'- not to break."

"We did."

"Ss-so I won't." There's no truly good answer to that, so Aizawa does the best he can,

"I'm proud of you, kid."

For all that neither of them want to move, because at least here, in Izuku's childhood bedroom that somehow feels so foreign now, they're safe for a while, reality is rapidly creeping in. They can't ignore what's so likely to happen in mere hours' time for any longer.

"Do- do we need to go already?" Aizawa doesn't want to be giving this answer, but he told Nedzu to give him three hours to retrieve the missing student, and it's apparently getting rather close to that already,

"We do, kid. Nedzu will be looking for me, and therefore you, in just under half an hour's time." Izuku doesn't pout, doesn't whine or whinge. No, he grits his teeth and nods against the hero's chest before pushing himself up again.

"Sor-" Aizawa scowls at that, though not unkindly,

"Don't be, Izuku. You have nothing to apologise for." The kid falters, ultimately nodding all the same, and Aizawa shoves himself off of the bed, patting the fluffy curls on his way up.
"I'll wait for you outside, and we can head back to UA together."

"Yes, Sensei. And you can wait in the living area if you want, Mum's at work. I told her I was ill."

"Thanks, kid," he grunts, because he admittedly had been planning to go back out of the window, and a sofa will be far more comfortable. Shame the Midoriyas don't have a cat. *(He notices a lot from the upkeep of the flat, and from the pictures. There's only one featuring a man, all dark curls and dark eyes, who looks ready to burn the photographer, and there's technically a fair resemblance to Izuku, barring their demeanour. Even in the dangerous heights of fear and anger, his Problem Child has never looked as simply dark as this man. Beyond the pictures, there's the stressed and dated furniture - the breakfast crockery chipped in places, the kitchen paraphernalia clearly well-used, albeit also well-looked after... No, Izuku perhaps hasn't had the easiest home life.)*

Their trip back to UA is, thankfully, a quiet one. They take Izuku's usual train route, and the slightly askew view into one of his students' daily patterns is a little jarring, albeit not in a bad way. It's humanising, perhaps. Or maybe normalising. It's certainly domestic, and Aizawa is painfully aware of how low the kid's shoulder is when pressed against his own, or rather against his bicep. If he could change one thing about this, it would undoubtedly be the kid's involvement because when they get out of these loops - and that *is* a when, not an if, because the latter is unthinkable - there's going to be a lot of trauma for one teenager to handle.

But the kid won't be alone, so hopefully it will be manageable. Regardless, it's not even a question until they manage to break or

escape the time loops, so there's little logic to dwelling upon all of the "after"s in this moment.

"Should we try taking Mist or Monster first?" He wasn't really intending to ask that already, but here is as good a place as any, provided that they keep any too-blatant details subtle or, all the better, non-existent. Izuku, fortunately and not particularly surprisingly, picks up on exactly that,

"Double-team Mist? Like we did in eleven, I mean." And that's not a bad idea either.

"Hn, sounds decent. Want to bring any of the others in?" The hero tries to push his own reluctance underneath neutrality. No point to asking a second person's opinion if he then biases it with his own tone or words.

"No," Izuku immediately retorts anyway, but there's a pause in his posture afterwards, and Aizawa waits patiently. Better to give the kid thinking room.

"Do we know if the mist conducts electricity?"

"Ah." The teacher knows exactly what the kid's getting at, and it's a good line of thought. But he's fairly sure in the... what, the third or fourth loop, maybe even the second, he'd seen Kaminari startle into using his Quirk when the warp gates appeared. And nothing had seemed to happen.
"Not for certain, but there's only evidence supporting the contrary so far."

"And response to sound waves? I'm thinking it would be negligible, but you might have noticed...?" That one's a little easier, if still not a reply he truly wants to be giving,

"Minimal, at best. Doesn't react to vibrations from movement at least. Nor shouting."

"Right. Okay."

"Oi, Problem Child, don't get worked up over it," he admonishes, although there's almost exactly zero bite to the words,

"We can try tag-teaming, we'll just have to be quick on the turnaround."

As expected, the steady acceptance of his student's idea has the kid straightening slightly, that fire bursting back into full life in his eyes: the kid is determined to do his best. And so is Aizawa.

Their best isn't enough. It hasn't been before now and it isn't this time either. They started off well enough, with both of them immediately charging at Kurogiri, leaping straight over the grunts with Izuku a half-step behind his teacher so that both Shigaraki's and Kurogiri's Quirks could be erased at once without impacting the greenette's abilities. It also means that the students are still together at the entrance, and should be able to cover their backs when it comes to the lower level villains now behind them in the plaza.

It takes half a second too long though, because Shigaraki is already shouting something to the Nomu, and Aizawa feels a nudge against his arm and, just on the edges of his awareness, he bears unseeing witness to how Izuku pauses long enough to somehow tank, dodge or redirect the Nomu's initial attack. But he trust his kid, so Aizawa only continues with his part in this equation, keeping both of the main villains' Quirks erased even whilst lashing out support gear to start binding Kurogiri in place. And, as planned, Izuku appears over his shoulder with a flipped axe kick, his heel slamming down right beside the collar of the armour piece, and yet again Kurogiri fluctuates and flickers, a candle flame caught in the wind. *Now* they truly have to be quick.

Izuku darts back towards the hero, and they sink into ready positions, back to back with the hero's knife now unsheathed and in Izuku's hands.

That moment is when things go wrong.

The Nomu is already moving. That single, measly fact is the catalyst for everything that goes to hell from there. Izuku has to duck and dive, rolling to avoid the fist about to slam into his head, but there had been less than a metre between him and Aizawa-sensei, and the Nomu has presumably been told to target both of them, because the fraction of a moment that Izuku leaves its obvious sightline but the man is still within it, the creature apparently changes its mind, and then there's a fist slamming into Aizawa's back, something in his ribs or spine cracking in a way that echoes through the facility, and Izuku nearly throws up at the way that his hero crumples to the ground, eyes wide and mouth clenched still, limbs splayed.

"S-Sensei-" he gasps out, and the sight of those dark eyes tracking him, for all that they're pain-hazed, is both a comfort and a nightmare in motion.

Either way, it has rage welling up to replace the utter despair that had flooded him with white water rapids, all of it steaming away into lava within only a few sharp breaths, and then Izuku is moving again. One slash, two, three, have the Nomu's arms rendered temporarily useless, and he takes the opportunity he's created to divert his attention to Shigaraki, knowing that he has a few precious seconds.

They go to fairly good use. He curls in from the side, knife in one hand and his Quirk's aurora-fire sparks along the other, and he gets a solid punch into Shigaraki's side, sending the villain flying. Sure, five fingers also trace along his scalp, hair and skin falling to the ground in equal parts dust and clumps and static-agony, but Izuku couldn't care less. Not when he's got a Nomu to stab in the brai-

There's a hand around him, ribs and hips creaking ominously in the tight grip, and before he can try to wriggle out or stab the hand or anything else even remotely useful, Izuku is being held tighter, air rushing around his legs and head and shoulders in an awful high-pitched whistle ahead of shrieking - his own, judging by how raw his throat abruptly is, yet it's absolutely nothing in comparison to the throbbing, shuddering agony of his mangled legs, buried in their very own crater in the concrete, his chest cushioned oh-so kindly atop a

concentric radius of warped ground, and the single, rather vague comfort is that he's near to his teacher.

With the last sparks of energy he can muster, of life, said teacher manages to move those final few inches to hold his dying kid's hand, Shigaraki's jagged laugh echoing through his heart-torn mind. He doesn't know which of them goes first this time.

An anonymous tip-off is worth a try. Or so they reckon. They know that they can't directly tell Nedzu in person, but perhaps if they're speaking through perceived secrecy it might work, or so they're hoping. A public phone box is inconspicuous enough to limit what Nedzu can trace, and Izuku making the call rather than Aizawa gives them another layer of anonymity. The hero, however, stays close, protecting the kid's back and listening in all at once.

"I need to talk to Principal Nedzu." A brief babble, and Aizawa can practically feel the discontentment from the kid but, before he can try to interject, Izuku speaks again, tone flat,

"I believe there's a threat to his students." Another pause then, wherein the kid vibrates, almost as though with a silent growl or full-body chills, and Aizawa reaches back to try and ground the kid, ending up with his callused fingers around Izuku's wrist, squeezing gently and rhythmically, the hints of a breathing pattern to it. After several seconds, the teen settles a bit more, and adds on another, crucial piece of information,

"There's going to be-"

But Izuku falters, a single deep breath rattling in his chest, and then he goes on and Aizawa could take a leaf out of Hizashi's book and fucking scream,

"-nice weather today, don't you think? Fuck," he hiccups, the word half a sob, yet he soldiers on, brilliant mind no-doubt whirring, "Maybe- maybe some dark mist where it shouldn't be, in cities and ships and even fire. And- and-" The words die upon Izuku tongue, and the teacher behind him can feel their bloated corpse weight upon his own shoulders.

Izuku shoves the receiver down. Aizawa, feeling how the kid is trembling almost violently, turns on his heel and pulls the kid close, tucking him into his chest, arms loose around Izuku's shoulders because the hero would understand if the greenette doesn't want to feel restricted right now, but his Problem Child whimpers, burrowing closer into his chest, and the unspoken message is more than obvious. It doesn't take him half a second to tighten his arms around the kid's shoulders, drawing him in impossibly closer. Nonsensical reassurances and praises are lost to soft curls as he hunches over the kid. Fuck, Aizawa really wishes that he could do more for the kid, that he could protect him from all of this, but equally he is aware of the realities of their twisted days, not to mention Izuku's raw determination. Protecting him isn't truly possible.

Now isn't the time for remorse though, not when there's a child shaking apart in his arms.

"I- I really thought that might-" Every syllable seems to arch lightning up the kid's throat, scorching and jumping and painful, and it has Aizawa tightening his hold on the kid, rocking them both slightly from side to side,

"I know, Izuku, I know. I thought it would too," he confides, because it had seemed like a logical loophole in the Quirk, particularly as they hadn't mentioned the timeloop at all, but no. No, they're still alone unless Nedzu decides to read a *lot* into it.

Apparently Nedzu must have read something into it, because only ten minutes before homeroom there's a quiet call from the vents above the

faculty room,

"Good morning, Shouta-kun." And then Nedzu is dropping down, landing nimbly upon all four paws on Hizashi's desk opposite the underground hero's. Aizawa straightens, eyebrows furrowing, and tells himself to expect anything because this is the Rat God and whilst Izuku and himself have predicted what's most likely to happen - the trip being postponed, additional faculty being redirected to attend, a prior inspection of the grounds - there's no guarantee of any of it. Particularly if the principal decides he doesn't trust or believe the warning.

"Nedzu-san." There are various other greetings throughout the room, but most of the other teachers return their attention to their work or conversations when it becomes obvious that Nedzu is here to talk to Aizawa specifically.

"Quite simply, there is something I need to inform you of." Aizawa grunts, knowing he normally wouldn't be eager to know something that may put more unnecessary work on his plate. Paperwork, for example. But oh, how his heart is singing to know there's even a slight chance Nedzu might have interpreted the kid's cryptic half-message correctly.

"First though, please do tell me how you would interpret the following message." The principal's phone is suddenly on the desk between them, and it's playing audio. Audio of *Izuku,* though low quality and sheer emotion mask the voice a fair bit, thank Kami.

Aizawa shoves that fact aside though, instead focusing in on the kid's exact wording again, trying to figure out what logical conclusions he could come to directly from it, with no additional information *(without the bias of fifteen deaths soil-trickling down his spine, as heavy as empty coffins)*.

"It... it sounds like either a prank call-" doesn't that hurt to say, but dammit it's a logical view,
"Or the warning of someone who physically can't say things more clearly, or in more detail."

"And what of the content itself?" Nedzu presses.

"Cities, water and even fire - it reminds me of the USJ. Could be a preoccupation bias on my part," he tacks on, much to his own chagrin, "But it is the most logical explanation for it at first glance. And second." Aizawa pauses then, wanting to see how far Nedzu takes this, and when his employer only waves a paw, he sighs. Fuck, he's exhausted.

"Their tone sounded genuinely distressed-" It was. It really, really was because he had a kid sobbing into his shirt for at least ten minutes afterwards,
"-which lends credence to the warning over the prank call. And dark mist being somewhere it shouldn't be... We did have the media break in, and the camera glitches were suspicious to say the least. I don't trust it. The situation, that is," he clarifies, and realises his slightly hasty addendum has triggered a certain *look* in Nedzu's eyes, but it's too late to care about that now. He can only continue to act normally and hope he doesn't compound on it.

"Much of that lines up with my own conclusions, Shouta-kun."

"Right," he grunts, slumping further into his seat again and thinking furiously, trying to go for the next most reasonable question,
"And how did this person know? Have you tracked them?"

"They used a public phone in a less affluent area of Musutafu, albeit one not too far from our grounds. They rather cleverly chose one in a CCTV blind spot and arrived at their destination with the aid of either Quirks, sewers or the rooftops."

"Right," he mutters again,
"And you think we can trust them?" The last thing he wants is to put doubt in Nedzu's mind, for all that the creature *can* doubt. However, by the same token, deviating too far from what his usual responses would be will only be making himself suspicious, and doing that could make things worse for his kids.

"I know that there's a sixty-three percent chance that there was some level of truth to the information, based upon the emotional telling and

patterns of speech, along with the specific details. They appeared to be very fearful, under the influence of a Quirk, or both. With that, I believe we should perhaps take additional precautions."

"I mean if there might be an attack then it would be stupid to do nothing." He isn't usually quite as blunt to Nedzu, but he is sometimes, and right now certainly calls for it.

"Shou?" Hizashi is staring at them both from opposite the underground hero, slightly wide-eyed, and he grimaces at his husband. Blond eyebrows furrow then,

"Nedzu-san, I could put my third year class onto a study hall after lunch today?"

"Ah, thank you Hizashi-kun!" Nedzu chirps, clapping his paws together with a toothy grin, eyes gleaming, and part of Shouta wants to absolutely sob - that part of him that loves his husband more than anything else in this whole shitty world, that wants his Sunshine to be nothing but healthy and happy and not literally disintegrating in front of him - but the rest of him knows that Hizashi is incredibly strong and his crowd control abilities will definitely help a lot.

In fact, it does help, at first.

Hizashi is calm, a figure of reassurance for them all, and he doesn't hesitate to scream at the crowd of grunts, sending almost all of them staggering back, if not completely collapsing. Behind them, the Nomu blocks the vestiges of the attack from hitting Shigaraki or Kurogiri, but Izuku and Aizawa are already rushing forwards. They ignore Hizashi's alarmed call for Izuku to go back with the rest of the class, and the kid slams a Quirk-flooded axe kick down upon the Nomu's brain, his heel digging in with a sickeningly wet noise, but neither of them flinch. No, Aizawa is too busy with lashing out capture weapon to restrain the Nomu, even though his gaze is focused upon Kurogiri.

Judging by the shouts and cries from behind them, he's a moment or three too late, and he silently curses himself for that fact even as he

leaps forward, knife abruptly in hand whilst Izuku moves on to face Shigaraki. It doesn't go well. The Nomu, whilst definitely somewhat dazed and in as much pain as it can process, is still far more able-bodied than they had bet on. And it shows in the way that it flails out an arm, one that Aizawa had been using as an anchor point with his support gear, yanking the hero's trajectory off to one side. He's not exactly unaccustomed to it happening, but still. The Nomu is far stronger than most opponents, and it has his off-course swing crashing him into the ground before he can get his feet under him, and something cracks in his arm. Fuck.

The underground hero staggers to his feet anyway, growling under his breath, and retracts his capture weapon in a blink. He knows that Izuku is good enough at fighting unpredictably that he should be able to manage just a little longer against Shigaraki and Kurogiri, and that gives him time to try and-

"Help Midoriya!" Hizashi is here, determination fierce in every line of his body, in the set of his face, and Aizawa is hopeless but to listen. It terrifies him inside-out to leave his partner against a monster, but he does it anyway, because this is Hizashi. He trusts him.

Pivoting on his heel, he flares his Quirk just in time to have Shigaraki's hand, reaching for Izuku's shoulder, be useless, slipping away as the kid ducks, no disintegration in sight, and he sends out loops of capture weapon in tandem to Hizashi yelling somewhere behind him. The familiar sound is almost comforting, situation bedamned.

He takes that back only a minute later though. Not even, probably, because he's just kicked Kurogiri in the chest plate, the hit juddering up through his leg and making his broken arm shriek at him, and a single coil of capture weapon around Shigaraki's head to yank it back, giving Izuku a better chance to get a punch in for the villain's guts, and one of the screams from behind him chokes off abruptly, lost to a high-pitched keen. Aizawa whirls around, the perfect timing to see the aftermath of the blow. To see his husband on the ground, an awful expression twisting his beautiful face, blood everywhere and legs mangled, shattered, all shards of bone and sinew, those stupid leather

trousers that Aizawa hates are torn right open, and-

He doesn't see or think or breathe then. He just moves, knife in hand and rage howling through his throat, and he stabs the fucking abomination, climbing its back and crashing his blade down again and again and there's someone behind him but all Aizawa can see is his husband, eyes hazy but not yet dead, staring up at him with a thousand different emotions but barely any of them the *right* emotions, and it's the last thing he sees before he dies. He regrets everything and nothing.

He wakes up in his husband's arms and, for the first time through the entire sixteen loops they've lived and died through, he *sobs.* It wakes Hizashi up, and Twig flees to the foot of the bed, but it's alright because he has his most treasured person staring down at him, fine fingers stroking his cheeks, wiping his tears away with quiet words murmured in the warm space beneath them, kisses butterfly-pressed all over his brow and nose and cheeks, and Hizashi is breathing and worrying, is in their bed with him, safe at home. He can cling to his husband's hair and sleepshirt, feel the warmth and rise-fall of his chest.

For all that Aizawa detests these fucking loops, having his Sunshine back with him is more than worth every single moment spent in agony.

Izuku wakes up to his All Might alarm on their seventeenth morning, and knows that the last loop was a mistake. Every loop has been a

mistake, but the way that Aizawa-sensei had lost every possible inch of logic and sanity at the sight of Mic-sensei on the ground... No, it doesn't bear repeating. *(Because Izuku has noticed how Aizawa-sensei screamed upon seeing Mic-sensei hurt, how he had completely flipped without a heartbeat of hesitation, and Izuku knows, knows,* ***knows*** *that there's something deeper there. Something like love.)*

Either way, having more people feels *bad.* It feels wrong, and Izuku can't honestly tell if that's an effect of the Quirk or just their natural dispositions, but when they meet up on their roof that morning, Aizawa a good twenty minutes later than usual and visibly haggard, they both know that they can't do that again. Never.

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Aizawa has been trying to figure out an alternative, as per usual. Has been wracking his mind for plans they haven't tried yet, for alternative approaches to previous ideas, has been clawing through himself for shreds of hope. He- he could *try* not turning up at UA at all. If he goes missing there will definitely be a UA-limited uproar, because Hizashi *(his stunning Sunshine, bloody and broken, legs shattered, voice choked out-)* knows they went to bed together the previous night, that they woke up to Aizawa sobbing this morning, and it's not in Aizawa's nature to be late, let alone not turn up at all, regardless of a bad night. Furthermore, by a very similar token, Nedzu would be able to find him anywhere, at any time, even when he's not limited to certain areas, and there's enough free periods in amongst the other Heroics teachers' morning that Nedzu could likely send a few of the other faculty out, let alone the bastard's pull amongst other local heroes and police. On top of all of that, even if Aizawa did manage to escape attention, there's the far more problematic risk, as far as he's concerned, of his class still being taken to the USJ but by another teacher, if Nedzu managed to rejig the schedules which he probably would, for the sake of a missing teacher.
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Trying to configure a plan along these lines takes Aizawa all the way to their seventeenth arrival at the USJ. Then his thoughts are overtaken by how odd it is that he has not become desensitised to the following events. He still has the gut-searing panic, the tsunami-strength of rage, all tied up in a pretty little parcel of desperation, a growl in his throat and his eyes burning with more than his Quirk, until he isn't thinking any more.

The nineteenth morning starts with Izuku nearly sobbing when he wakes up. But he pushes it down, back, away, thumps a hand over his heart to listen to the barely-steady beat of it, and forces himself to get up instead. He needs to meet up with Aizawa-sensei, and they need to decide between their two potential plans for today, and then they need to *win,* to defeat the villains and hopefully break the timeloop. *(It's terrifying that they still haven't been able to figure out who or what is causing this, or how to break it, but they've been prioritising just trying to get out of it alive. They haven't succeeded yet.)*

The street is cool-aired and not too busy at half six in the morning, and it helps Izuku ground himself as he hurries to the fire escape, trailing fingers over the banister of the railings, the slight catch of rusting metal an unfamiliar, refreshing texture that makes it easier to stay present, despite how it grates at the pads of his fingers. Oh, actually, it kind of reminds him of clearing Dagobah beach, all half-there metal and abandoned places. That feels like a lifetime ago now.

Such thoughts don't truly matter though, and they're quickly abandoned in favour of sitting down on their ledge, notebook in his lap and bottom lip between his teeth to keep from muttering. He knows that Aizawa-sensei doesn't entirely like the biting part, but he has to acknowledge the logic of not muttering aloud, and until they can put together a better long-term solution it will have to do. And it quickly becomes irrelevant, for this morning at least, because then the

hero is rolling to a comfortable stop further back on the rooftop, and they fall into plans and plots from there, sitting shoulder to shoulder, Izuku's knee bumping the man's leg rhythmically. It certainly more grounding than any rusty metal or open air.

There's nothing to ground him hours later, when he has to watch such a small mistake as being distracted by Kaachan and Kirishima running into the fray be enough for Aizawa-sensei to blink a half-second too early, and then there's a dust-speckled hole in his hero's chest and the man is falling to the floor with empty eyes, mouth slack and hands loose at his still sides.

Izuku gives in to the beast coiled around his heart, viper-venomous and lion-roaring, without remorse.

He pelts closer, bending down to pick up Aizawa's knife on his way, the handle and weight of it familiar to him now, and ducks in low, a snarl upon his lips, and with a scattering of green sparks, he slashes the blade over and through whatever he can, Quirked power flooding through his veins, underlighting his skin, and then something - two somethings - fall to the ground, blood arching through the air as Shigaraki screams, rearing back.

Izuku wants to grin, wants to shriek his own victory, wants to throw up at his own actions, but he knows he has no time for it, no opportunity, so he keeps on moving, flickering One For All through his limbs as he bursts forward, knife still in hand, and buries it deep in Shigaraki's shoulder, dragging it back out as he retreats. He's not quick enough to avoid the hand that trails against his forearm, but the villain is on his knees, bloody and panting, something alarmingly bright in his eyes.

"You- you're not like the usual NPCs. No, no, you-" he pauses, rasping desperately, more blood spattering to the floor,

"-You're a *rogue."* Part of Izuku wants to banter, wants to vent his awful feelings in sarcastic words and scathing humour, but instead his attention is caught by the sight and sound of Kaachan rocketing over

from where he and Kirishima had frozen and it makes Izuku want to cry, although he doesn't know why *(because it has dread shackling upon his wrists and ankles, morbid fascination for whether or not he'll die before Kaachan and he doesn't want **any** of them to die like Aizawa just did-),* and that minor distraction is enough. Too much.

Izuku recovers before Shigaraki, and he moves forward again, knife raised and eyes alight in a lightning-lit tempest.

His blade meets pale flesh, but not of a villain. There's a portal, and there's that familiar cold-itch sensation of passing through it but Izuku can't stop his own momentum quickly enough, and then a childhood-familiar voice is crying out in pain, falling from the sky in a senseless tumble and something snaps when the blond hits the ground. Maybe several somethings. Even from at least fifty metres away, Izuku can see the stab wound, just above Kaachan's hip. *His* stab wound.

But he promised not to break, has sworn it to himself in every scratched-out word and inch of disintegration and bus ride to their deaths since, has counted breaths in tandem with the words, so Izuku doesn't race over like he wants to. He knows a dead body when he sees it, and he can't help the dead, but he can keep everyone else alive.

He can't. Kirishima is the next to go, dropped from too-high by a portal, and suddenly Todoroki appears and Izuku has to dive into the path of a pale hand to stop the heterochromatic boy from losing an already-scarred eye and then it's all over.

Until he wakes up to All Might again.

"Twenty two."

"Twenty two." Neither of them care for the curious glances they get for their exchange prior to the homeroom bell, too busy mentally preparing to go through with today's plan, one where Aizawa-sensei has spent his morning dragging All Might into school with some of his time still intact.

Izuku knows from several previous loops that sending himself through a different portal isn't exactly difficult. It's what follows that is. The building wasn't designed to withstand two peoples' weights, and pushing Ojiro out of the way was a given, even if watching the taller boy blister his hands upon burning wood to try and get back to Izuku isn't exactly fun. And, well, Izuku does get to learn something. After all, he had thought that he knew what it felt like to burn alive, too used to explosions and fire breath that have scarred him to this cursed day.

Turns out that choking, heat-sick in a burning building is pretty different. He still dies either way.

They sit silently upon their rooftop, going over today's plan in their heads. One of them speaks up occasionally, clarifying a detail or checking previous information, and when the alarm on Aizawa's phone goes off they both stand up, the man clutching Izuku's shoulder

for a moment, and then go their separate ways.

Their twenty-fifth deaths aren't the bloodiest, not by a long way. The soul-crushing part is how Uraraka is thrown straight into the roof of the USJ by the Nomu, plummeting to the earth in a lax collection of broken limbs, how Kouda is disintegrated into nothing, and how they ultimately still fail.

They need to change their strategies, combine them. There's parts of several of their plans that have been good - having Izuku immediately take out the Nomu was one of the best ideas, albeit Kurogiri ruined that - and delaying the entire thing even just by a few minutes was useful as well, kept everyone from settling in and getting understandably complacent prior to the attack. But Kurogiri is a problem, and they know by now, from bitter experience, that not taking him out in some way early on, whether via Erasure or something else, is a literal death sentence.

So on the twenty-seventh morning, he grips Aizawa-sensei's hand one more time, and then they both leave their roof, ready for another try.

The morning they cycle through as usual, trying to keep up their facades, and then Aizawa deliberately turns up to their afternoon homeroom a few minutes late, just enough that it's neither suspicious nor excessive, and everyone gets sent off to change. Izuku keeps Aizawa's knife tucked amongst his utility belt, unnoticeable unless anyone takes special notice of his support gear, and he forces himself to keep up idle chatter with his friends as they rumble along, headed for the fight. The edges of his nerves that do show are easily brushed aside as anticipation for their first rescue training, Iida and Uraraka

accepting the reasoning without question because Izuku has gotten better at lying *(he's been good at it since he was four years old and mourning friendships and a father that never came home-)* over the last... damn, over the last twenty six days, right as they arrive, the bus pulling up outside the facility. Aizawa checks his watch, just like Izuku knew he would, and stands, turning to them all. A short speech on behaviour and taking training seriously is enough to both sober the mood and to prevaricate for another two minutes, before they're all piling out, gathering together and entering the facility and nobody even has time to truly marvel at their surroundings before Aizawa-sensei is snapping to attention.

"Villains! Iida, go, now!" The teacher shouts it just in time for the class president to get out, doors sliding shut behind him. It has a tiny, tiny fraction of relief aching through Izuku's chest, even whilst he calls his Quirk forth in a veil of supernova sparks.

With their knife in hand, he flickers forwards, standing beside the class in one moment and flipping above the Nomu within two blinks, and he's driving the blade home, eyes and mouth closed against the burst of blood that greets a solid hit, and he tears the knife free as he falls, kicking straight off of the floor again. He has very much learnt to avoid its death throes by now. In front of him, Aizawa-sensei is unfortunately occupied with the few dozen grunts, so Kurogiri has managed to warp away the majority of the class but they planned for this, so it'll just be the secondary version of their strategy that they need to work to. Which is fine. It's a good plan and, according to it, Izuku gathers his power around him again, ignoring the iron-slickness in his throat and ferrous-thorns digging into his bones that lets him know he's using slightly too much of it at once, because right now it's more important to run at Kurogiri, pivoting into a slightly messy roundhouse kick that clangs into the metal armour with reverberating force, actually shifting the main figure of the villain's mist to the side. The flickering, fluctuating shadows of him is familiar, and Izuku takes the opportunity he's created for himself to angle towards another target: Shigaraki. His knife is still at the ready, and he aims to stab at the villain's back. There's no such thing as unfavourable or dirty tactics in a fight, after all. Not when it's life or death. Yet another lesson that Izuku has been learning too quickly and too early.

The point, though, is that it's a *good* idea to aim for Shigaraki's back, given both the nature of his Quirk and the complex nature of this fight overall. Because Kurogiri is still around, even if he'll be semi-incapacitated for a minute or five, and it's the chance they need.

Izuku's knife meets flesh, but not the flesh intended. Maybe he'd taken a beat too long, maybe Shigaraki had already been paying attention, or maybe it's just bad luck, because it definitely wouldn't be the first time for any of those options, but he ends up stabbing a hand-clad forearm instead, right above one of said detached hands, and there's a corresponding howl of pain.

Except Shigaraki is still reaching for him, another pale hand - an attached one, that is - grasping for him and it passes through the handle of his borrowed knife just as quickly as it does Izuku's actual hand and he doesn't get back in time to stop it.

He's lost a fair portion of three fingers, each featuring various protrusions of bone that weren't disintegrating as quickly as plain old flesh and muscle, and there's an entire warped hole in the back of his hand, trailing shallower wounds connecting all of the deeper points, and his blade is useless now. It's- it's not good. Not the end of the world, nor even the fight, but it's enough to have Izuku wavering where he stands, watching on warily as he clutches his half-gone hand to his chest.

"You- you're not an NPC really, are you? Your stats are too high for a noob. So what's your cheatcode, huh?"

"Don't have one," he gasps out, head woozy but heart still aflame because nobody has died yet. They're still in with a chance.

That's the moment when Aizawa-sensei bursts forward, the last of the grunts slamming to the ground behind him, and Izuku almost sags with relief. If both of them are here, then maybe-hopefully-surely they can win? Shigaraki is injured, Kurogiri hasn't stopped flickering, and the Nomu is dead, still.

Nothing goes wrong in the next ten seconds, nor immediately beyond, and Izuku is entirely willing to take it as a good sign. Aizawa-sensei dives at Shigaraki, capture weapon whirling around his shoulders, and it rapidly develops into a complex dance. There are punches and kicks and elbows, the villain snarling and panting, trying to take advantage of the brief chances where Aizawa-sensei's eyes pause in their Quirked glow and Izuku watches on. It's moving too quickly for him to risk jumping in, not when erasure would also cull his Quirk, not to mention the risk of getting caught up in the whips and coils of capture weapon. The last thing he wants is to hamper his hero's fighting.

It becomes a moot point though. Out of the corner of his eye, Izuku catches sight of Kurogiri beginning to solidify and steady once more - he doesn't hesitate to saturate himself with acid-buzzing lightning once again, charging forwards. He's a blink too slow.

He sees the portal forming beneath his leg before he even begins to pass through it, yet he can do almost nothing about it. He's in mid-air, momentum piling up to knock Kurogiri out, or the equivalent of it anyway, and all he can do is try to pull back, starting to twist away in the hope that he'll either not hit whatever Kurogiri is aiming him at, or failing that then hit it with less force.

His ankle still slams into Aizawa-sensei's bicep anyway. It has something twinging in Izuku's leg, not quite a break but very much painful anyway, and worse than that, the blow has the hero's current curl of capture weapon shooting off-course. That's all the opportunity Shigaraki needs to dart forwards, one of those malicious smiles creeping under his hand-mask, eyes glinting in bloody tones, and then Aizawa is blinking, physically unable to *not* for any longer, and it all compiles into one awful second. The arm he brings up to guard his vitals catches the hand aimed for his throat - more exposed than usual thanks to the sheer volume of capture weapon he'd been controlling at once - however there's a second hand, the one covered in blood from Izuku stabbing Shigaraki only a minute or two ago, and it buries deep into the teacher's chest, right below his ribs.

The soft, choked-off noise lingers in Izuku's ears when Kurogiri warps him three metres to the left, in prime position for Shigaraki to lazily turn to him, hands raised, and his ankle is giving way beneath him, reactions too slow-

He blinks, and his All Might alarm is shouting in his ear, obnoxious enough that Izuku nearly grabs the clock and throws it across his room, already knowing how the movement would have had green sparks ricocheting through the room, and how he would have to explain that he isn't feeling well in answer to his Mum's worry or actually he doesn't have to because this loop he just lays there, listening to the repetition of it. They- they'd been so, so close. It had been right there, one more step, second, stab away, yet they weren't quite enough.

Izuku isn't ashamed of the fact that he stares at the ceiling and lets his All Might alarm overwhelm the sound of near-silent sobs that morning.

But he promised he wouldn't break, so he gives himself five minutes of meltdown before getting right back up. Today, this loop, is going to be the one. He'll make sure of it. The fact that they'd been so close, whilst beyond frustrating right this second, should be giving him hope. Sure, that's hard to see when he can still feel a Quirked hand wrapped around the back of his neck, almost affectionate, a parody of kindness, but it's *true*. They were close yesterday, so they should be able to make it completely this time. Only logical, right?

Those words are much what Aizawa-sensei says to him half an hour later, when Izuku has washed his face, rushed through the meal with his mother that he has only sometimes actually been attending for the loops, and hurried his way to their rooftop. They spend the rest of the time until they really have to leave for school sitting there quietly, confident in replicating their plan again today, secure in the

knowledge that when they act the same, other people's reactions tend to hold true too, with minimal variations. It's one almost-guarantee that they can rely on within these loops.

Izuku blurs through the morning, careful to try and make sure he acts exactly as he did yesterday, with the same conversations and reactions and food. Small deviations can have big ripple effects, butterflies or otherwise, and neither he nor Aizawa want to risk jeopardising things when they feel so *close* to breaking the cycle they're stuck in. It's with this in mind that the teacher once again turns up to afternoon homeroom a few minutes late, and gives a nearly word-for-word repeat of his small speech before they get off of the bus at the USJ facility itself. Izuku, knife sheathed on his belt, meets his hero's eyes and finds the same molten heart of determination in that dark gaze as he feels within his own chest, and it helps keep him calm as they bunch up, beginning to enter the building.

People start shouting within moments of walking in, and it's not awe at the space around them. Iida spins to leave upon Aizawa-sensei's demanding bark, and everyone else stays together, Thirteen falling back towards them and Izuku edging to the side as casually as he can, one hand falling back to rest upon the handle of their knife.

He moves. A flurry of glowing sparks, welding through the very air itself with an ozone stench, heralds him leaping straight over the few dozen grunts, in tandem with Aizawa-sensei throwing himself amongst them from below, but all of Izuku's attention is poured into moving faster than Kurogiri can predict, into the knife in his hand and the careful balance of his Quirk. He lands, twists, leaps again, and then he's got a leg hooked around the Nomu's throat, swinging around immaculately, perfect for driving the knife deep into place. The blood is bitter where it splatters against his tight lips, astringent against his nose, and he hates the rapidly-drying sensation across his freckles, but it's nothing in comparison to dying, let alone watching his friends and teacher die, so Izuku easily ignores that, and rebounds off of the now-thrashing Nomu, headed for Kurogiri.

The villain is at the tail-end of warping away the majority of the class,

and that gives Izuku enough time, enough of a chance, to power himself up a tiny bit more, just that final bit, and he's spinning for momentum, foot crashing into metal armour with that expected echoing clang, the one that deadens his leg for half a moment but is well worth it.

Shigaraki is his next target. And, pivoting on the spot, knife still firmly in his grasp for all the blood makes it a tad slippy, Izuku can afford a split-second of attention on the fact that Aizawa-sensei is nearly done with the various grunts, is in fact moving through them more quickly than last time, likely thanks to having gone through the exact same version of this fight once already, less than twelve hours ago. And Aizawa's rapid progression is snatching the majority of Shigaraki's attention, giving Izuku the final edge he needs. This time when he darts forward, knife aimed for just beside the villain's spine, Shigaraki doesn't start turning in time to block the blow with an arm. No, Izuku slashes the blade in fairly deep, carving an arching path along one side of the villain's back, and it isn't an instant kill, but it's more than debilitating. It gives the greenette the time to retreat again, wrist barely clipped by disintegrating fingertips at all, and he splits his attention more evenly between Kurogiri and Aizawa-sensei now facing up against Shigaraki.

That decision pays off.

Kurogiri is just about starting to solidify and centre again, and Izuku rushes forwards. There's a little too much of his Quirk in his legs, but it's worth it to flip forward with an axe kick, incapacitating the villain again, before he can start to interfere. Behind him, Izuku can hear Shigaraki panting, shrieking for Kurogiri, but it doesn't do any good. No, Aizawa-sensei is binding him up more and more by the moment, Quirk flaring to life and fading before returning again whenever he needs it, and he's moving so much faster than the villain, a blur in comparison, enough of a difference obvious that Izuku finds himself very glad for having been able to stab Shigaraki in the literal back. It's hampering him far more than the arm wound had last loop.

As he watches on, Aizawa-sensei ducks in close once again, elbow

snapping up and catching Shigaraki firmly under the chin, knocking his head back and sending him crumpling to the floor. He doesn't get up again.

They both burst into quick movements then. Izuku kicks Kurogiri's chest once more for good measure, even though he was still wavering anyway, and watches on as his hero pulls out a pair of cuffs from his utility belt, clipping them around Shigaraki's wrists, the villain's arms carefully twisted so that he'll only be able to disintegrate his own back, not the cuffs or any surroundings. Not easily at least. And either way he's still knocked out for the time being. The teacher moves on then, stopping briefly beside the Nomu, kicking its head, continuing towards Izuku once he's confident it's actually dead.

It takes several long seconds of his Quirk being active on Kurogiri, but the mist-blot of his distorted figure retracts back into something rather more human, and Aizawa is able to snap his second set of cuffs onto him. Curiously, nobody from the entrance nor the surrounding zones have started to approach them, and both Izuku and Aizawa seem to register it at the same time, moving closer together, Izuku handing the hero his knife back with words on their lips, ready to act-

They blink, heave a breath, and then they're next to each other again, still in the USJ, but it's the tiniest bit different.

Someone - unfamiliar, tall, willowy, pale skin and paler hair - is standing before them, a single hand raised, nail varnish a chipped purple. It's far too pretty and domestic for this building. This warzone.

"Welcome back."

Neither of them hesitate - they've learnt not to, after all - despite how soft, almost kind the voice is, and the way that they're moving in tandem with each other is literally easier than breathing. Capture

weapon snakes low, a knife slashes at a stomach, and Izuku leaps up in a shower of toxic sparks, a kick curving for their face. The knife and kick are dodged, side-stepped and ducked all at once, but the support gear simply diverts, yanking at their ankles, tugging and tangling, and the person is sprawling to the ground, writhing. More capture weapon and red-flaring eyes deal with that, and then Izuku is stepping forward to crash his heel into their temple and they're unconscious.

The two look at each other, heaving chests and wide eyes, Izuku's voice trembling fit to fall apart when he croaks out a single question,

"Are we- Sensei, are we free?"

"I don't know, kid, I really don't." They stare at each other then, before shifting to stand back to back, scanning their surroundings. Aizawa is painfully aware of how Izuku's shoulders are only pressed halfway down his back, of just how short and young his kid is, but that can't be helped right now. No, instead they both stare out at the rest of the USJ, and take in the scene: the first and most obvious difference is the lack of blood.

Well, no, that's not quite right. There *is* blood. In fact, the Nomu is facedown, brain visibly mangled just like it had been moments ago, blood smeared and pooled around it, albeit nothing too graphic. The grunts are all semi-conscious at best, stirring and groaning in their piles. But Kurogiri and Shigaraki are gone, no sign of them lingering, and nobody else is in the plaza at all.

Abruptly, the rest of the world seems to flood in all at once. There's a thunderclap-boom from towards the entrance, and it heralds the clamour of several voices, the racket of the surrounding zones, and it's like a bubble has popped, letting the real world trickle in again. The ringing voice of All Might declaring that he's here has Izuku flinching impossibly further against Aizawa's back, the man not even thinking before he’s pressing their knife back into Izuku’s hand, because he's woken up to that voice, those words, too many times now, and it's not really been a good thing. No, far from it.

There's no more time to contemplate things like that though, or to get lost in the confusion washing over them both, because then people are arriving in the plaza. It starts with All Might, but there are other members of Class 1-A too, and it's a mess, a frantic blur of too many voices and bodies that have Izuku and Aizawa staying back to back, neither able to feel safe right now.

But it's All Might's voice making Izuku flinch for a second time that has the underground hero straightening further, albeit never breaking his contact with his kid, and letting his own voice ring out,

"Silence!" Everyone, number one hero included, falls quiet, and Aizawa drags in a deep breath, not quite daring to take his knife back from Izuku yet.
"Students, barring Izuku, proceed out of the facility. I assume more back-up is on its way?" The last question is directed at All Might, who nods, gaze flickering to Izuku briefly. Aizawa doesn't care about that though. Not right now.

"Why the fuck is Deku-"

"Bakugou, go, now. Don't think I won't be having you expelled or put into General Education." It's not even much of an empty threat, really, because right now the thought of *anyone* putting his kid under threat is utterly unacceptable, another student or otherwise. Equally though, he's probably not thinking entirely logically right now, Aizawa knows. None of them are.

"All Might, please ensure the Nomu - the monster - is dead, and that this villain is unconscious. Don't let them escape under any circumstances, they appear to have a time looping Quirk." To his credit, the blond only falters for a beat, gaze searing as it settles over the pair still pressed together, before he nods gravely, smile long-since evaporated.

"Of course, Aizawa-kun. Are either of you injured?"

"Not me. Kid?" Dark eyes cut to Izuku then, not allowing for any lies. Good thing that they're not required then,

"Not really." All Might nods again then, before moving off to the Nomu.

Of course, it's when he's done nudging it with his foot and is instead kneeling beside it, Izuku and Aizawa watching on warily, that the pale villain rouses behind them, tilting their head back in a half-hearted chuckle before either of them can so much as turn around. They stay sprawled out on the ground, staring up at the ceiling with hazy brown eyes, gesturing lazily with one hand, dismissive,

"Oh, don't worry. My Quirk's exhausted already. I didn't expect you to last a month, I really didn't. UA's lot really are a different breed all together." They flash a toothy smile, crooked and cut-throat,

"If you'd given up at any point, if you'd been the ones to kill yourselves, my Quirk would've failed, or rather succeeded, and you'd both be dead." The pair exchange a glance at that, in tandem with the villain's eyes slipping closed again, both of their lips remaining sealed shut, but ultimately they ignore the information. It doesn't matter. Not now. They've *survived,* with everyone alive, and that's all that matters now.

They didn't break.

Izuku and Aizawa must think that in the same breath, because suddenly they're surging towards each other, Izuku curling into his hero's chest and being held close in turn. Reverent words are being murmured against his curls, the arms around him are strong and solid, and he can't help how he sobs, losing every twisted emotion into Aizawa's jumpsuit, not dropping their knife even as he clings right back to the man, hiding away from the world in the only place that has been safe for the last four weeks.

They're safe, together, and in the real world once more. There's so much to deal with, from police statements to therapy, explanations for the other faculty and students to just showering and being able to see a different date on the clocks and calendars; none of it matters right now though. Not when they've died twenty seven times, when they've fought so long and hard and bloody to get back to something that resembles reality, that won't put them right back at the start again.

No, none of that matters now, because together they *lived*.

Settlement

Chapter Summary

> "Subsidence of the ground or a structure built on it." Alternatively, "an official agreement intended to resolve a dispute or conflict".

Chapter Notes

> This is a brief interlude, and then I'll post a third part hopefully in the next week or so, probs once I've caught up on my regular long fics :D

Izuku and Aizawa must think that in the same breath, because suddenly they're surging towards each other, Izuku curling into his hero's chest and being held close in turn. Reverent words are being murmured against his curls, the arms around him are strong and solid, and he can't help how he sobs, losing every twisted emotion into Aizawa's jumpsuit, not dropping their knife even as he clings right back to the man, hiding away from the world in the only place that has been safe for the last four weeks.

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*No, none of that matters now, because together they **lived**.*

They must also make an awful sight though, because around them people are gasping and talking, worried. Izuku barely registers a single word, holding their knife even tighter, and is glad when people begin

to obey Aizawa-sensei's order to leave. In fact, even as that happens, there's a fresh round of shouts and calls from the entrance, one that has them both startling, adrenaline spiking all over again, only to register the exact voices and the figures of the people being loud.

"Mic-sensei's here," Izuku mutters, tone warm, and it earns him the flash of a half-smile from the teacher beside him.

"Yeh." It's honestly kind of difficult to watch the blond coming down the steps, remembering how he had shouted for Izuku to rejoin his class, how he had crumpled to the ground with shattered legs and haze-and-heartbreak eyes. How Aizawa had fractured, nearly breaking completely.

But he hadn't broken, and now here they are.

"Sunshine," Aizawa murmurs, not stepping away from Izuku's side but shamelessly raising a hand for his husband. The blond is running, skidding to a stop before them without second thought, a frantic edge to his movements, and then there are fine-fingered hands running over Aizawa's face and shoulders and sides, words already pouring forth, drenched in concern.

"We're alive." It's all he can really offer, because they've *died,* have watched Hizashi die, but they're here now.

"Good," the blond manages, half-smiling with a melancholy relief. "And you, lil' listener?" Yeh, Izuku can tell why Aizawa and Mic-sensei are together.

"Oh, you know about that?" There's genuine shock to that, and it has a shard of ice in the teen's chest, dread-rich,

"S-sorry!" Izuku yelps, not having meant to say that, but before he can flail Aizawa has grabbed his hand - the one without the knife - and squeezes gently, the breathing pattern that they're both used to using now. It helps within a moment, and Izuku shudders back into something vaguely calm. The underground hero tugs the kid further forwards so that they're stood within a foot of each other, knowing that Hizashi won't demand any difficult answers right now, won't push

him-

All Might is stepping back over to the three of them now, cutting off their half-abandonded conversation with a grave question,

"You said this villain had a timeloop Quirk?" Aizawa takes the half-step to the side needed for pressing his shoulder against Izuku's once more, eyes straying across the entire area, taking in all of the *living* students as they leave the USJ, at his husband standing tall with worried eyes, then looking back at the two of them and the fallen Nomu.

"Yeh," he croaks, and then Izuku is tucking himself under the man's arm. It gives them both strength.

They're going to need it, to get through the aftermath of such a Quirk.

Simulacrum

Chapter Summary

"An unsatisfactory imitation or substitute." Originating from the Latin "simulacrum", meaning a "semblence"

Chapter Notes

also at one point in this I originally typed "a single keychain, of a hug catting a banana" and I feel the need to share this fact with you-

also I skim-read this between midnight and 1am, so any mistakes are just that :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

All Might is stepping back over to the three of them now, cutting off their half-abandoned conversation with a grave question,

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"Yeh," he croaks, and then Izuku is tucking himself under the man's arm. It gives them both strength.

"Shou, a timeloop-" The underground hero raises a hand, pausing his husband, but the look he offers up is melancholy rather than annoyed, and the blond subsides easily enough, eyebrows furrowed with how he looks between the two, then shifts to stand beside Aizawa, shoulder to shoulder. If it's slightly defensive against All Might, then it's only a response to how the little listener seems so uncomfortable and, in turn, so does his husband. Hizashi really doesn't like this.

"This isn't the time or the place," the hero states, utterly deadpan, but

the way his arm tightens over Izuku's shoulder is more than telling.

"That's fine," Hizashi hastens to reply, brushing gentle fingertips against his husband's hand, trying to make sure that he doesn't get too close to the kid in case he startles the teen. Extra stress is blatantly the last thing they need right now.

Before anything else can happen though, more people are approaching them.

All Might takes the chance to back off, retreating behind a wall that shoots up thanks to Cementoss, and then there are police officers and paramedics, and Izuku is about ready to activate his Quirk and run away with his teacher in his arms, but he knows, he *knows,* that they're meant to be safe now, that these are responsible adults trusted by Nedzu to be on campus, but his chest is still choking with ivy, throat tight with iron-thick bile, and he doesn't have to think for his Quirk to be haloing him, a condensed supernova that has Aizawa-sensei turning to crouch in front of him, hands tight around Izuku's own, their knife pointing towards the ground. But the man doesn't activate his own Quirk, and Izuku is endlessly grateful for it. Grateful that his hero understands him so well, even if it came from bad circumstances.

"Izuku, kiddo, these are safe people."

"But- but we don't know them," he gasps, unable to help how reedy his words are, how strained his syllables. He's trying not to panic, but they're going to leave the USJ and they're going to be alive, *everyone* is, and Izuku doesn't know how to deal with this knowledge, how to work beyond the scope of their knowledge-

There are arms around him. Familiar ones. The scent of blood and cats and coffee is far too safe for what it is, yet Izuku can't begrudge it, not when his Aizawa is holding him close, surrounding him with warmth and breathing and a heartbeat and Izuku knows that they're both alive. They didn't break, they only bent, and they're still here.

"S-sorry Aizawa," he gasps out, syllables slipping upon his bile-ridden tongue, but the arms around him only tighten, more insistent and grounding again,

"Don't be kiddo. Fuck, don't be sorry for any of this, understood?" Izuku breathes, fighting for air, and finally manages something like a twisted snort,

"Lan-language."

"Watch your own fucking language, Problem Child." The snarl, paradoxically, is gentle at its core, tearing right through Izuku's wavering barriers to settle in his chest with nothing but kind warmth, a careful hand at his heart.

"Hypocrite," he hiccups, feeling how the salt stains on his cheeks are tacky with his words, but the arms are still firm around him, still strong and steady, so he shamelessly leans into them.

"Want me to carry you?" The man offers, the words a tiny, private murmur with no hesitation or judgement or condescension in it, and the offer is incredibly tempting, but Izuku wants, *needs,* to be ready to act at any moment, to be able to help defend them both, and he knows how much his hero values that exact same ability. Carrying a heavy teenager doesn't allow for that.

And so, with all of that in mind, Izuku shakes his head, mumbles a thank you, and instead taps a beat along the jut of Aizawa's hip, glad when he understands the silent message and leans back a little, hands shifting to hold Izuku's biceps, keeping him bracketed in without restraining him, and it's only the familiarly broad heat of those hands that keeps him from squirming away from disintegration and crushing and explosions-

"Kid." Izuku drags in a deeper breath again, refusing to give in to his panic any more, and sheathes their knife in his own belt so that he can reach up and hold one of those safe hands in his own. They're still mobile, still able to attack and flee and defend at a moment's notice, but they're anchored too. It's as safe as they can be.

"I'm here."

"We both are," Aizawa reaffirms, squeezing his fingers around Izuku's.

They turn to face the world again at that point. Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, breathing slipping into matching rhythms.

Izuku can't bring himself to acknowledge the concerned glances of Mic-sensei, the distant fog of All Might having deactivated his Quirk from beyond a wall of cement, the fact that there are police officers, Nedzu and Midnight-sensei all standing fairly close, blatantly waiting for the two of them. But he only needs to follow Aizawa-sensei's lead, and he knows he'll be fine. Because this world outside of their loops might be unpredictable and terrifying after they've been living the same day and events over and over and to be thrown out of that is just so jarring, so unsafe; it has Izuku unsure on how they're meant to act when they don't know what's likely to happen, however they can make do. They have to.

"Hello Shouta-kun, Midoriya-kun," Principal Nedzu greets from his perch upon Midnight's shoulder, and there's an almost-soft edge to the politeness, something that is perhaps the tiniest bit understanding.

"H-hi."

"Nedzu." Their answers are terse, but not quite rude, and it's enough to have the creature tilting his head slightly. The scrutiny isn't entirely uncomfortable, but not very pleasant either. Luckily it comes to an abrupt halt when Izuku squeezes his hand with his hero's again though. Nedzu must pick up on it, must assess the likely reasoning behind it, because the critical look fades out to something more neutral. Something safer.

"I've been informed that a timeloop Quirk has come into play today?"

"Yeh," Aizawa grunts, and glares at the wide-eyed looks from several of the people around them. He and Izuku obviously don't relax slightly at the few back-steps through the group.

"Very well. I take it neither of you are injured?"

"Not really," the man shrugs, confident in the fact that neither of them have anything that needs the intervention of outsiders. And at least his dismissal has the couple of gathered paramedics leaving.

"I see, I see. Shall we take you both back to the main campus so you can clean up, perhaps eat, and then we can go through the more formal processes?" Aizawa nods, moving to slip his arm around Izuku's shoulders, hand still clasped, and is glad for Hizashi being the one to fall in behind them as they begin to walk out of the USJ, because he's a familiar presence, and he's also observant enough to accommodate for how both of them begin to slow down as they head for the entrance. All of the students have been ushered out and, presumably either off to the side or loaded back onto buses headed for the main campus, because they're not visible through the doors from a direct approach, and in their place is a swarm of officers, heroes and restrained or unconscious villains. The League had brought dozens, if not literal hundreds, of small-time, petty villains with them, and it shows in the continued activity.

It's not said activity that has the pair slowing down though, every step dragging.

There's noise swimming in their eyes, half-dampened and half-ringing, an aching underwater cacophony, and the hero can feel Izuku's shoulders hitch, just once, under his hold. All he can do is squeeze his hand gently over his kid's bicep, because he's not entirely sure that he's breathing himself. The world beyond the USJ is logically no different from where they're standing now, it has the same air and people and ground, the blue sky too bright for a day like today *(for a bloody clusterfuck like the last month-)* and people too loud for the grief still lurching along their spines, a vigil march upon their bones. Nothing is different. It isn't. *(Except for them; they've died and lived and saved and failed, all of it over and over again until they almost stopped counting the number of times that they woke up once more, until they clung to nothing but each other and the very idea of this moment-)*

Yet here they are. Neither of the pair had intended to stop, but they have, frozen solidly out of reach of the entrance, and if anyone tries to talk to them then they must be shushed, because nobody interrupts them.

It's surreal to think that they're truly leaving the loop. That this isn't some trick, a hallucination or change of trap, except logically they know it shouldn't be. Aizawa had used Erasure on the villain when they were taking him down, and that was after the distinct jolt of returning to this- this, what, this timeline? This reality? The man isn't entirely sure that he actually wants or needs to know the mechanics of the Quirk that has held him and his Problem Child in its grasp, but he is also very aware that Izuku thrives on Quirks, on understanding and picking them apart, and that he's been trying to understand this timeloop Quirk with a ferocity greater than Aizawa himself, a fascination to it, morbid fixation. It's not necessarily been a healthy thing, however it was a necessary one. It just means that he needs to find the kid closure, and he has a strong feeling that knowing exactly how this Quirk worked will do that for his kid. So he'll listen too, and understand and rationalise, if only for Izuku's sake.

It's also for Izuku's sake that the hero forces himself to draw in a deep, fortifying breath.

"Shall we leave, Izuku?" It's a little stilted, falling into something almost formal yet fractured around the edges, and he doesn't look down to see those green eyes, because he knows they'll be looking out at the sky just like he is.

"I... Yeh, thank you, Shouta." Somehow that doesn't startle Aizawa. Not like it seems to for the people around them. The kid hasn't gotten into the habit of using his given name, but that's why it feels so right in this moment. It's a separation, a distance, and yet one that puts him closer to the man all at the same time. He can't blame the kid for it.

Settled now, or something closer to it at least, Aizawa lets the kid hook fingers through his belt, keeps his own arm looped across the too-small shoulders, and they step forward once more.

And the world really isn't different, except it is. There's fresh air pulling away the lingering iron stuck in their senses, sunlight pouring directly over them, dousing them in pale gold, the slightly clearer racket of people and vehicles, and it's beyond surreal.

"Is this- Did we really do it, Sensei?" There's awe and fear and everything in between in those words, compounded down into something ultimately anxious, and he gently squeezes Izuku even closer in return,

"We did, kid. We did." There's a breath, two, a waver to their stillness, and a single word more delicate than silk-spun spiderwebs:

"Oh."

There's a longer pause then, verging on stagnant but they're simply both processing, taking in unfamiliar faces as heroes and police load up villains, a tidal wave of people ebbing and flowing and never coming too close, even Hizashi just out of reach now.

"You two want to head back?" The prompt is gentle, completely open to being ignored or rebuked, and the underground hero feels yet another surge of gratitude for his husband, even as he finally looks down at his kid, meeting those eyes. There's intensity there, fierce and fallow all at once, and Aizawa feels the same pulled-apart aches in his own heart and mind, the struggle to process reality, let alone register it as something safe. But standing here all day won't fix anything, and they both know it.

"Let's go."

They get urged onto a small bus, clearly one that the majority of the faculty had originally travelled in, judging by how several of them pile in after the pair of them and Hizashi. Some must be staying behind, presumable thanks to the missing presence of Cementoss, Snipe or Midnight. All Might attempts to keep a low profile by coming on last, and nobody brings it up with Izuku, so he leaves it. He doesn't know if any of the teachers beyond All Might and Aizawa know of his awareness of the hero's true skinny form. Regardless though, Aizawa and his kid take up the very back row of seats, still pressed together

and watching out of the windows with hawk eyes, sceptical yet wondrous all at once. The too-familiar path is blurring past them, and it's the same but different. Coming in this direction is something that's only happened once, and for Izuku not Aizawa, then the lighting is slightly different, the lack of thudding footsteps and barely-rhythmic breathing an odd contrast. It's all just that little bit wrong.

But wrong doesn't translate to about to kill them, so they keep themselves calm. They study the world around them, and the people around them, and they stay grounded as best they can. Aizawa keeps the kid's hand clasped in his own, tucked against Izuku's shoulder so that he can also have his arm around the kid's shoulders at the same time. Their knife ends up balanced atop both of their thighs, within easy reach for either of them, and they *breathe.* They watch and think and exist, knowing that the loop is broken. *(Knowing isn't entirely the same as believing, belied by their unsettled hearts and twisting guts, but it's enough. It has to be.)*

They've got a whole new environment to learn, even though it's one that they technically know.

The teachers further forward in the bus are falling into quiet conversations now, but none of them about Izuku and Aizawa. The pair are listening. They hear nothing about them, only reports about villain numbers and student injuries, plans for addressing the interrupted curriculum. It's all practical and logical and easy to process without devoting too much attention to it, and it eases the travel for them both, the background noise a grounding point.

Getting back to the main campus is almost as surreal as leaving the USJ building itself. Stepping off of the bus is fine, if not for the faint shivers of *offthebus-goingintobattle-gottabereadytofightdielive* whispering in their minds, ricocheting between vertebrae and settling into heart-ache cracks.

The main campus building is as tall and gleaming as ever, windows

and metal and sunlight, the hints of people and noise and movement. Izuku breathes, and continues to breathe, steadying everything within himself as much as he can, hoping that the solidity and warmth of himself will also help his Sensei.

Hopefully it does, because both of them lean that tiny bit further into each other, Aizawa shifting his arm to no longer settle around Izuku's shoulders, albeit still holding hands, but it's enough to make their contact more subtle. Safer. They've spent the last month balancing between hiding a closer connection and simply not having the room to care. To have to adjust that to a world with guaranteed consequences is disconcerting to say the least. Obviously there's repercussions, every action has a reaction, but when they're used to a sick sort of trial and error, it puts an extra weight to every decision now because it's guaranteed to *last*.

"Would the two of you wish to clean up before attending the necessary meetings?" Nedzu is once more perched upon a shoulder, although it's Ectoplasm's this time, and his head is tilted slightly, not quite on the edge of analysing but close to it. Izuku doesn't really know how to react, but Aizawa is already glancing down at him, then back up to the principal.

"Yeh, thanks." Nedzu smiles , toothy yet somehow not threatening, more akin to Aizawa's Cheshire grin than anything as cruel as Shigaraki,

"Quite alright! I believe you may prefer to both use the faculty bathrooms, yes?"

"Hn," the underground hero grunts, already nudging Izuku around and past the other teachers.

"The second floor meeting room, Shouta-kun!" The chirp reaches them despite their reasonable pace, and Izuku almost giggles with it, although he doesn't want to be rude.

They walk quickly through the corridors, past classrooms that are either empty or full of students with locked doors. The whole school is clearly on lockdown. Makes sense, given how many of the Heroics

teachers have been pulled to the USJ, and the unknown nature of the exact attack.

Nobody stops them, although there's a few glances from through the doors, and the pair stay quiet, content together. Any urge to break down or rush or yell in joy is buried beneath relief and exhaustion. This- It's been a lot, an awful lot. Almost too much. But they're breathing, and so are the rest of the class and teachers, which just means that they need to keep themselves calm. Clean up, get through the formal processes that need completing, and then take the chance to sleep. To rest until they'll have the safety of a new date entirely. It's taken a month to come after all.

Regardless, they do manage to keep calm for the time being, because if nothing else walking along quiet corridors together is safe, headed towards the faculty room but then going beyond it, down a corridor rarely used or even seen by students, through one of the staff-only doors in the entire school and down another, far shorter hallway before pushing through a swinging double-door.

"This is the faculty bathrooms, kid - changing rooms, small bathrooms there, separate showers. I'll be out here unless you want me to go?" There's the very, very faintest edge of reluctance to the offer, but Izuku knows the hero would abide by whatever decision he himself made.

So it's probably a good thing that Izuku does *not* want to be far from his teacher right now.

"Stay Sensei, please?"

"Always, kid." He manages a wobbly smile then, ducking his head in a vain attempt to hide the flush flooding his cheeks. Before he can shuffle over to the bathroom though, there's a touch of a forearm against his own *(not hands grabbing, crushing or disintegrating-)* and it has Izuku pausing, waiting.

"There are spare towels in all of the shower rooms. I have some spare

clothes in my locker here too, if you want to shower."

"I..." The teen trails off, weighing the pros and cons, but he doesn't want to make anyone wait, nor be vulnerable for that long, even if washing away the lingering blood and sweat and *awfulness* is tempting.
"I don't think I want to shower, thank you."

"No problem, kiddo." There's a hand in his hair, but he watched it move, and he knows that heat and those calluses, so Izuku relaxes into the gentle hair ruffle.

But then he's stepping away, smiling a little, and shuffles into one of the rooms Aizawa indicated as a bathroom.

It's big and bright, much like the majority of UA. The counter stretches the length of one wall, said wall entirely covered in mirrors, and opposite that there's a perpendicular partition wall separating off the toilet itself, and there's a tall cupboard directly to his right, undoubtedly with the linens Aizawa-sensei managed. Grumbling to himself, he opens the door, glad to find some neat stacks of white and dark green towels, plush. They're wonderfully soft to the touch. It's no wonder that Izuku struggles not to bury his face straight in it, but he doesn't want to dirty a towel before he's splashed his face with water at the minimum.

And it's not until Izuku turns around, looking up, that he catches sight of himself in the mirror, that he notices something odd: there are scars on his face.

It's nothing obvious or graphic, but there's an almost rose gold sheen to some of his skin - an arc along one temple, a jagged sort of radius over the bridge of his nose, something that could almost be a handprint over his throat. Then he leans forwards, tipping his head as far forward as possible whilst still able to see in the mirror, and starts pulling at his hair, separating it out to look at his scalp and, after several long seconds with different sections being pulled here and there, he sees it - a large splotch of this weird scarring. The splotch,

from what he can make out with tugging his hair this way and that, is actually maybe three or four or more of them, merging together into one. Looking at his face again, there's something warmth-gilded over his irises, dusted in his eyelashes and turning the veins of his eyes rose gold. And Izuku has a rather nasty feeling that, if he were to take off his shirt, he would find various others of these scars, all of them from wounds that *killed* him.

"Ai- Aizawa?" he calls, voice wavering, and isn't surprised when the man bursts in within literally three seconds, capture weapon flaring.

"Kid?" He hasn't relaxed fully yet, but some of the tension leaves him at the lack of intruders or blood, and Izuku can't help but relax a tiny bit as well, glad to have his hero with him again,

"Look." It's plaintive, nigh-on pathetic, but the man has no judgement or hesitation in how he steps closer, staring intently at Izuku's face. A gentle hand, calloused and warm, comes up under Izuku's chin, carefully tilting his face from side to side, and he gets to watch that dark gaze shadowing over further.

More than that, he gets to look up at his hero and see the far more silvery patterns over Aizawa's brow and hairline and temple. They hadn't been there even just fifteen minutes ago.

"You have them too."

"Do I?" The man pauses in his inspection of Izuku's marrs to turn and look at himself in the mirror, and his eyes widen the tiniest bit. One of his eyelids is completely silver, something that might be a starlight-glaze over pupil and iris.

"Fucking hell."

"Fucking hell," Izuku concurs, and gets a soft rap of knuckles on top of his head in subtle reprimand for the language.

"At least it's evidence?" he tries instead, and the wry question earns a

sigh from Aizawa, more fond than anything else,

"I'll give you that, kiddo. It's something."

Neither of them linger then, because there's nothing to be done about it, and Izuku still needs to get the worst of the grime off of his face. Admittedly, they're not half as bloody and grotty as they normally end up by the time they get anywhere decent through the loops, but the dirt of it is as much mental as physical, cloying stains on clear skin.

Equally though, neither of them feel like going unwashed nor leaving the other's sight, so the teacher silently goes to the cupboard to grab his own towel, and they take turns in front of the sink, cupping water to submerge their faces and running damp hands through their hair, picking out the worst of any debris or dried blood that actually is there.

"They're going to be permanent, aren't they?" Izuku murmurs, their eyes meeting in the mirrors. Aizawa idly notes that the kid's been a bit too rough on himself, found in rouged cheeks and clinging eyelashes, hair tugged about and staying only thanks to the weight of water, but now isn't the time to deal with it.

"Logically, I'd have to say yes."

"Alright." They both seem a little surprised by Izuku's easy acceptance of that, but it's not like either of them are strangers to scars, so perhaps it should even be expected.

Regardless, Aizawa towels the worst of the water out of the kid's hair for him, because apparently he has no idea what to do with his mane, which Aizawa fully intends to set Hizashi onto at some point, and satisfied that they're both relatively comfortable once more, he ushers Izuku back out of the bathroom, headed for the meeting room where Nedzu had indicated everyone would be waiting.

They walk into said meeting room side by side with straight backs and steady hands, albeit both having to fight back the marrow-deep urge

to shift back to back, weapons at the ready, because there's so many people *looking* at them, facing them with scrutiny, that even though they're all familiar faces, it's more than uncomfortable. *(Said people though, are caught up in the little details, not the big picture. The odd metallic patches marring their skin, the shadows of their eyes and creases of their posture. How they lean into each other. It's impossible to miss with the training the heroes all have, the care and concern they each feel.)*

"Thank you both for being so prompt!" Nedzu chirps, shattering the odd tension that had fallen over the room, and it's enough to prompt the pair to settle at the chairs clearly meant for them, one to the left of Nedzu's place at the head, the second directly beside it. Hizashi is the one bracketing them in.

"Sure." Aizawa sounds as though he'd rather be anywhere but here, honestly, although he doesn't technically grumble or complain as they take their seats,
"How much do we need to go through today?"

"Not too much, I assure you, and certainly no more than you should wish. Primarily however, I must confirm that you believe yourselves to have been caught in a timeloop-based Quirk?" Izuku nods, a tad jerkily so, Aizawa shifting slightly,

"Definitely something of the sort."

"Quite correct. The Quirk that you were both caught in has been confirmed as a timeloop Quirk, thanks to several sources such as Registry data and the help of Detective Tsukauchi. He will be taking both of your statements as soon as you're ready," Nedzu adds, and nods in return to Aizawa's silently questioning eyebrow.

"But for now, I believe an informal debrief may be wise?" Izuku and Aizawa look to each other in exactly the same moment then, before the man shrugs in acquiescence.

"Alright. But I reserve the right to leave the conversation at any time." The statement of it surprises many of the teachers because Aizawa would never normally bother declaring such an obvious thing, but then they register the child next to Aizawa, how his shoulders have

slumped slightly, hand stilling upon the knife in his grip. It explains a lot.

Nedzu has apparently cottoned on far sooner than the rest of them, because he's already answering,

"Of course! If either of you need a pause or to stop completely, feel free to say. Now then, my first question, before I detail what I have been able to parse about the Quirk, is whether any sustenance would be preferred, and also how many loops you both lived through?"

Most of the room are taken aback by the odd combination, but don't interrupt or question it, particularly when the teen in their midst is already shifting forwards slightly to answer:

"No, thank you. And this is the twenty-eighth." Midoriya's voice is flat, except then he leans back a little once more, shifting his shoulders in a way that's oddly familiar *(it precedes underground raids and leaping down into a plaza to protect students, visiting cloud-overlooked graves or attending difficult parent-teacher conferences alike-)*, and gains an edge to his next words,
"But we didn't both die in every single one."

"Oh?" Aizawa takes over now, the transition seamless, tacit and easy,

"I died, what, twenty five times. Problem Child one less. If one of us died, there was approximately five minutes until the loop reset and we were both waking up again." There are low gasps and shudders and curses throughout the room. They go ignored.

"Hm, that fits with what I have been able to put together about this Quirk. Would you prefer an explanation?" Izuku is already nodding, and judging by the rather severe expression on Aizawa's face, he doesn't disagree.

Nedzu nods in return, shifting a tad to steeple his paws together, watching them both intently as he speaks, beady eyes gleaming and whiskers twitching,

"It was a rather overpowered Quirk, in some senses, yet underpowered in others. Primarily, it appears to have created a semi-tangible timeline, one that was looped within pre-set conditions, and it overlapped with this reality, our reality, but not entirely so. The most likely scenario, in terms of outcomes thanks to you breaking out, is that the average result of these loops was that which ended up being realised."

"So the thing that happened most?" Aizawa clarifies, shoulders tensing. Both he and Izuku have adopted rather stormy expressions.

"Exactly! Now then-"

"More of us should be dead then," Izuku interjects, stone-tongued and leaden-eyed, and several of the teachers flinch. However, Aizawa only gestures in lazy agreement,

"At the very least we should both have stayed dead. Neither of us survived more than a few loops to the automatic reset conditions. And the kids..." He doesn't finish that sentence, yet it's more than telling all the same. And beneath the obvious connotations, there's also something more subtle: he doesn't include Izuku with the other students. Not any more.

"Perhaps so. However, their sphere of direct influence appeared to be limited to the plaza, no? That's why it was the both of you who were looping. It stands to some fair reasoning then, that the only others who would be directly affected by you both breaking out would be those trapped more directly within it as well, even if they weren't looping in the same sense as yourselves."

Izuku and Aizawa pause then, exchanging heavy glances. There's communication to it, a back and forth to how they both shift in tiny increments, a twitch of the fingers or twist of the mouth, before Izuku nods,

"That would line up with our knowledge of things. We started killing the Nomu as quickly as possible early on, because there's only so many times you can bear being crushed or watching others get crushed, so it makes sense for it to have stayed dead, effectively. And

Kurogiri and Shigaraki getting away-" He chokes on the words, and Aizawa is finishing the sentence before anyone else can even think, arm abruptly around Izuku's shoulders,

"It would have been the commonality, if the loops hadn't ended once we were both dead, because we didn't often manage to take out both of them. And nobody else could have prevented the warp Quirk as efficiently."

"Certainly so," Nedzu acknowledges, far less chipper than moments ago.

There's a lull then. Izuku busies himself with clutching their knife, knuckles bone-pale beneath skin that should be red, and counts the shifting of Aizawa's side against his own, fully aware that his hero is likely doing much the same. It's grounding, because as long as they're alive, they can keep everyone else alive too, and then there's a cha- Well, they don't need to think like that now. But knowing so doesn't make it easy to act as such.

Around them, the rest of the faculty look at these two people - one a friend to many of them, the other a new student who had asked for every one of their autographs with equal enthusiasm - and they wonder just how this has changed them. What it must have felt like to die repeatedly, because they have only just been told the exact count and it's refusing to sink in yet, but it's more than clearly far too high of a number, and to watch the people around them be killed over and over - to not be able to prevent it... It must have been something beyond horrendous. And the horror of it shows in the odd metallic patches glinting dully on their skin, in their easy familiarity, and in their shared intensity.

There's nothing to be done to fix such things right now though. The two have fought their way out of the timeloop by themselves, and it's sure to take an adjustment period, however long or short, to get accustomed to leaning on other people again. That makes it the teachers' job to be patient and readily available.

The moment passes, and a soft clap of Nedzu's paws drags everyone back to the current matter at hand.

"I believe a few more details would be appreciated from both of you, then much else can wait for another day, yes?" Aizawa grunts in lazy agreement, shifting his arm slightly so that he can tap a brief beat against his husband's arm, earning a flash of a smile over Izuku's head. He's glad that his Sunshine is so intuitive and understanding, because he's not sure how he'd deal with it if the blond was being overbearing right now. If anyone was.

Aizawa and Izuku fall into a languid rhythm then, a rapport of information, detailing the Quirks of the main leaders, their primary theories regarding the Nomu's creation and subsequent conclusions about a higher power within the hierarchy of these self-proclaimed League of Villains. They emphasise what they know for definite versus what they've been able to surmise from that information. Some of the specifics - rates of decay, for poignant example - are rather alarming to hear. After all, the speed of a Quirk's effect is usually studied through repetitive, controlled tests.

A calculation of the rate of disintegration must have come from brutal, *bloody* experience.

But nobody can fix the awfulness of this knowledge, not right now, so instead they all listen carefully, committing the details to memory so that they'll be better able to fight the villains that have escaped, to better get revenge for what their people have gone through. To better protect themselves and their students in the future.

Eventually the supposedly-basic levels of information peter out. Izuku falls quiet first, losing steam to instead slump further into his hero's side, one hand coming up to tangle in the man's sleeve. Aizawa talks for a minute longer, but then he too stops, prompting Nedzu to nod slightly at them both, for all that Izuku doesn't look up to see it.

"Thank you both. Of course, any further information can be passed on whenever you wish!"

The teacher, after a beat, retracts his arm, briefly bumping his shoulder against the kid's in silent apology for it, and turns in his seat to fully face and devote his attention to his employer.

"Are all of my class as alright as they seemed?" He feels Izuku tense up at his back, and leans fully against the kid in tacit reassurance, not even flinching or shifting when a nose and cheek press into the back of his shoulder, breaths hot against his shoulder blade even through his jumpsuit.

"They are, no need to worry! The paramedics on-scene and Chiyo-san assessed the worst injuries as a few stitch-requiring cuts, a fracture and a concussion. All excepting the fracture were fully healed within an hour."

"Good," the hero huffs, tilting his head somewhat awkwardly to knock against the crown of Izuku's curls.

There's an almost-laugh breathed against his back, and both of them sit up straight again a moment later, twisting back around to sit properly in their seats, although Izuku doesn't look up enough to meet any of the teachers' eyes, and they find themselves hoping he doesn't feel embarrassed by some perceived weakness. Because he isn't weak just for being affected by events like dying and watching people die over and over again. Far from it.

However, the principal doesn't let any slight awkwardness linger.

"Now, as neither of you are injured either, I believe I shall send you home to rest!" Nedzu finishes, no room for argument in his tone, but Aizawa doesn't miss how his kid tenses up slightly once more. Dammit.

Izuku, for his part, is just a tiny bit stressed. He- he doesn't really want to go home, because his Mum's shift won't end for several hours yet, and he doesn't want to pull her from work nor be alone in the place that he woke up in for the last month, and his Mum is only going to stress over the attack, let alone if he tells her about the timeloop itself,

but he might not get a choice in telling her because the police or UA or both are probably obligated to inform her of at least the basics, although maybe because she's a civilian they might not-

Snipe pushes to his feet two chairs down, moving perfectly casually, slow except Izuku's too lost in his head to register it,

"C'mon kid, why don't we ring-" All he knows is that a hand is reaching for him and Izuku doesn't breathe, doesn't think, doesn't pause, and then he's moving, knife ready to take off fingers, the beginnings of a snarl twisting his features before his surroundings register again, and there's familiar warmth at his back, forearms draping over his shoulders,

"Kid, *kid*-" Aizawa-sensei is with him, and Shigaraki isn't here, and *oh no,* Izuku just tried to stab someone-

"Hey, Problem Child, we didn't break." The words snap something back into place, and he forces himself to breathe, tucking their knife away and reaching up to tangle his fingers into the hero's sleeve, knowing better than to suddenly grab on to him entirely. Neither of them like that at the moment, not without mutual acknowledgement first.

"S-sorry Sensei," he gasps, eyes closed against the reality around them. There's a huff of breath jostling at his hair in return, the man briefly butting his chin against green curls,

"Fuck kid, don't be."

"Language," Izuku mutters, something wry to his barely-there smile, and Aizawa seems to pick up on it even if he can't see the expression from his position behind Izuku, and he gets gentle knuckles rapped against his sternum in reply, even as Aizawa draws him further backwards so that they're pressed together, chest to back, the man's chin now fully hooked atop curls and able to feel each other breathing. It helps. It helps a *lot.*

They're both vaguely aware of the people around them, but only to the point of being conscious of possible attacks, and so they don't

register the glances exchanged. They don't know how obvious it is that they've gone through *something* together, and something more than unpleasant at that. The nervous, sweet kid that they've all seen through the first few days of classes, met in the corridors and heard of through each other, is in some ways very different to this person in front of them. If he'd been skittish before, he's very much on-edge now. As is their own colleague.

Of course, they all know trauma and therefore trauma responses. In fact, they know it more than well enough to recognise it in other people. And Aizawa has, as with every one of them, always had some level of triggers and paranoia, whilst equally Midoriya has never been the calmest or most settled of kids, but this is another level altogether. It's a quiet sort of awful to see.

But they're heroes, and they know how to deal with awful things: they make a life out of doing so. So they give the pair space and time without leaving the room, trying not to watch them too intently even whilst taking in the minor details. The metallic gleams are off-putting and eye-catching, and they even seem a little more distinct than when the pair had first walked into the room together. That being said, nobody allows themselves to focus on the... scars, they must be scars, nor on how both of them are breathing just-raggedly, eyes closed yet blatantly aware, judging by how they adjust slightly with the other heroes in the room moving or shifting, the consciousness of their surroundings never truly fading.

No, the other faculty give the pair the amount of privacy they can manage in this situation, and they wait patiently.

It takes a fair five minutes or so, but sooner or later Izuku huffs a random deeper breath, tugging slightly differently on the hero's sleeve, and Aizawa shifts, moving his head beside the kid's and murmuring something that even Hound Dog and Nedzu struggle to pick up on, but which might have been along the lines of *'You're doing so well, kid, so don't break now'* before they disentangle themselves, focusing back on the room at large.

"Do either of you require anything? I assure you that UA are quite able to provide any specifics should you wish, Midoriya-kun."

"Uhm, n-no, thank you. I just..." He trails off, no mention of home to be had, and nobody misses that fact, least of all Aizawa. But now isn't the time to press that, not when there are formal problems to deal with first, and not when they don't know the reasons behind it. It's hard to know anything much, or rather to understand how the last month of their lives will have affected even things they *do* consider safe, so it's undeniably best to simply support Aizawa in making any judgements and consequent decisions.

"Very well! I'm sure Shouta-kun can pass on any requests or needs you might have, or alternatively feel free to speak in person or via email with other staff members, myself included. Do you have any further questions for the time being, Midoriya-kun?" The teen shakes his head, curls shifting, and he manages the twist of a nervous smile,

"No, thank you, Nedzu-san."

"Of course!" He agrees, ears swivelling,
"Shouta-kun, any immediate points to raise?"

"Hn," he grunts, glancing down at his Problem Child as he thinks, those green eyes staring back up at him, unwavering.

As long as the kid's okay, Aizawa will be too.

With this in mind, and content that he himself is as fine as could be expected under the circumstances *(he knows his class are alright, that the Nomu is dead, and that he's with his Sunshine and Problem Child, what more could he ever want-),* Aizawa dismisses the offer.

"Then I shall let you both go and talk to Detective Tsukauchi! Don't worry, Shouta-kun," he tacks on, before the underground hero can interrupt,
"Today won't be the day for a full statement. A brief overview and the mention of any information you feel most pertinent will be more than

sufficient."

"Right," the man grumbles, but nods anyway.

"Hizashi, come with?" Shouta requests, shameless albeit in a low tone, hand intertwined with Izuku's as they stand up, the pair staying close to each other. The blond in question beams, apparently honoured to even be invited into the little bubble his husband has formed with this student, but doesn't bounce to his feet until they're both a few paces away, letting Izuku get some distance before he stands to his full height. He's a fair bit taller than the kid after all, and the last thing Hizashi wants is to startle him. Particularly after Snipe's near-miss.

The private room where Detective Tsukauchi is waiting is only a few corridors away, and he introduces himself with a serious expression and kind eyes, informing Izuku of his Quirk as soon as they bow to each other in greeting, explaining how giving their statements is going to work. And it actually doesn't sound awful. Well, admittedly, calling it an official statement isn't entirely accurate, because this is an overview more than a full statement - recalling the details of a month of dying and fighting and dying and waking up is no small undertaking and when they're fresh out of the loops, neither of them are really in the right headspace to do so - but it's the placeholder, sufficient for official records until they have the stability for more in-depth recollections of an entire month of planning and fighting.

What makes Izuku uncomfortable is that he has to wait outside of the room whilst Aizawa gives his statement first. He's apparently allowed to have the man with him for his own, because homeroom teachers are apparently legally permitted to act as guardians in immediate non-civilian situations such as this, but that doesn't work in reverse, and Izuku hates it. *(He has no idea how he's going to go home and function for literal days, days that are different to each other and unpredictable and full of unknown danger without the safety of his Sensei at his back.)* He wants to be safe. Even more than that, he wants the people he lov- the people he cares about to be safe.

Mic-sensei stays with him though, and Izuku is glad to have his

Aizawa's Sunshine with him.

And Mic-sensei, despite how he must be anxious too, is trying to keep Izuku calm. He's rambling about their cats, Izuku able to comment now and then, such as with knowing that Twig loves salmon more than anything else, but he didn't know that Choco-bun and Optician like to curl up in the sun together, white and brown fur a fluffy mess, and the pictures, whilst adorable, apparently don't do it justice, so Izuku will have to come and see them one day, Hizashi's sure they'll love him. It lets the teen give a wavering smile and push past his awful thoughts, fingers tight around the handle of their knife.

The blond doesn't try to get him to put the knife away, or to not keep an eye on the door to the private room where Aizawa-sensei has gone with Detective Tsukauchi who has a really interesting Quirk *(Izuku wants to analyse it, but he can't afford to get that deeply distracted right now, but also he might be able to ask some questions after his own statement-giving, if the detective is as nice as he seems-)* and instead Mic-sensei just keeps on talking to him, never reaching out for him or moving too quickly, keeping his gestures close to his body and relatively slow, considered and careful.

"-and Choco-bun always tries to steal our pastries, which is why he's named Choco-bun, actually-"

Both of them sit up abruptly then, because the door to the private room is sliding open. Izuku doesn't even think before he's on his feet, knife still in hand, but he doesn't need it because Aizawa is completely fine, blinking at them both with familiar bloodshot eyes, scratching at his stubble.

"Hey kid, Zashi. You want me to sit in with you, Problem Child?" That isn't even a question, to Izuku's mind, and his immediate answer reflects that fact easily enough:

"Please?" Luckily, Aizawa-sensei's answer doesn't seem to be a difficult one either,

"No problem at all. Zashi, you mind grabbing me a coffee? A big one."

"Sure, Shou! Lil' one, you want anything whilst I'm about?" Izuku doesn't register the slightly different nickname *(Aizawa does register it though, and he levels his husband with a soft, halfway-judging look, because Hizashi doesn't call just anyone lil' one-)* only pausing, one finger slipping down to probe the edge of the knife until Aizawa clicks his own fingers in wordless warning, glad when his kid abruptly realises what he's doing and stops it. He doesn't want to let the kid accidentally cut himself.

"Uhm, maybe just some water? Thank you?"

"Hey, kiddo, what about that strawberry milk you like?" Aizawa prompts, nudging the teen with his elbow. Izuku flushes a little, yet smiles all the same, nodding.

"I can do that!" Hizashi rushes to affirm, bouncing on the balls of his feet, clearly excited to be able to do something for them both.

Aizawa wishes that he could just grab both of them close and drag them home right now.

But he can't do that. Not right now at least, and maybe not at all. So he'll have to make do with what he can for the time being,

"Just knock before you come in. Thanks, Sunshine."

"Of course, **love**," Hizashi dismisses, soft and affectionate, and leans in slowly to press a kiss to his husband's cheek, wiggling his fingers in a thankfully less enthusiastic wave for Izuku, and then he's rushing away down the hallway, an edge of relief to the lines of his shoulder and length of his pace.

"You ready for this, kid? We can wait a bit longer if you want or need or whatever." The offer is genuine, thoughtlessly kind, and Izuku finds renewed strength in the casual support, enough so to smile a bit as he looks the man he trusts most in the eye, steady,

"No, it's alright, Sensei, really." Both of them hear the unspoken *'it has to be',* but Aizawa doesn't call Izuku out on it *(not when they've spent the last four weeks in a constant state of making do and pushing beyond-)* and the teen certainly isn't going to proclaim it himself, so it goes as ignored as possible, the pair instead focusing on their knife getting tucked into its sheathe, an end of the hero's capture weapon replacing it as something for the teen to fiddle with that's slightly less obtrusive, even if Detective Tsukauchi doesn't seem the type to judge over something clearly being used as a comfort tool.

It's set up as such that the pair move back into the private room. Tsukauchi glances up from some of his papers with a faint smile, tucking a sheaf away into his briefcase and pulling his voice recorder closer to himself.

"Hello again, Midoriya-kun. Would you like to ask any questions before we jump into this?"

"If you're not too busy, could I ask you about your Quirk afterwards? I really like them, and yours isn't a common type, even more so if it really is passive and-"

"No problem, although I won't be able to stay for long." The interruption isn't harsh, no, it's too soft-spoken for that, and that fact keeps Izuku at relative ease as the detective runs briefly back over the procedure they're going to be following, and double-checks Izuku's consent for use of the voice recorder.

Permission granted, the man offers a last quirk of his lips, before pressing the record button and starting to speak,

"Detective Tsukauchi of the sixth Musutafu precinct. Date is the eleventh of April, time is three oh-seven in the afternoon. Present in the room is underground hero and UA homeroom teacher Eraserhead, with first-year student Midoriya Izuku. Midoriya-kun, if you could please reiterate your name and age for me, and I will give confirmations according to my Quirk."

"Y-yes," he stutters out, abruptly very nervous again, but a knee presses against his, a single hand settling palm-up upon his leg, ready for the hand that Izuku settles atop it, holding on as though they were bloody and pulse-less,

"I'm Midoriya Izuku, and I'm fifteen."

"True on both counts. Could you please tell me your most basic overview of the events occurring at the USJ facility on UA campus today?"

"Well, villains attacked, and one had a Quirk that could create a timeloop..."

Izuku talks. He stays as calm as the rock-steady, summer-warm presence of his Sensei allows for, which is very much calmer than he would have ever been otherwise, and when Mic-sensei pops in silently with two coffees, one for each man, and a carton of strawberry milk for Izuku with the straw already in place, he settles even more. He's at UA and maybe that in itself doesn't mean that he's safe, but the fact that he's with his hero and with other trusted people nearby does mean that he is.

So Izuku tells of everything he needs to, never required to go into full detail of deaths or how it felt to wake up to the same ringtone as twenty times before and *know* that there's a strong choice he's going to die today, and it all comes down to whether he can save his classmates or not *(he doesn't say how Aizawa had screamed with something hollow-souled at the sight of his husband broken upon the floor; he doesn't tell of his own halfway-breakdown on the fourteenth morning, nor just how many different blood spatters he has committed to memory now, and not even that he knows exactly it feels to flake into nothing eyes-first, or to crumple like paper against cement and water-)*. Tsukauchi never once has to report a lie, and Izuku never once breaks down, and things are okay. Not great, but okay.

And when it's done, his throat sore from repressed emotion as much as the glass-sharp words that have been carving him apart from the inside-out, he's able to find little sugar-shards of joy in learning about an interesting Quirk that, in some ways, ache almost as much, but they're healing wounds. Ones that push him on rather than drag him down.

The world is different now, which means that he can be too.

It's with this mantra war-drum-echoing through his mind, chasing away some of the lingering shadows and their reaching hands, that Izuku goes through the motions of thanking and saying goodbye to Detective Tsukauchi, one hand still firmly entangled in the soft-rough-worn support gear, and with that done he and Aizawa step back into the main corridors of UA, Hizashi springing up from his chair not far from the door to greet them, eyes bright and something that might be relief creeping in when he sees that neither of them are too upset or blank.

They head to the faculty room at this point because apparently it will be empty, not to mention that it has all of their things, Izuku's included thanks to one of the other teachers bringing his bag up for him earlier. Mic-sensei leads the way, walking backwards and chattering with all of his usual pace but a little less volume and energy, the gentler tone more soothing then exciting, which Izuku very much appreciates. He'd rather not get worked up right now.

He might not have much of a choice in that though, because right as they're going through the faculty room door, held open for them both by a flamboyantly-bowing Hizashi *(which had earned a very sweet, if short, giggle that had Hizashi about ready to sweep the lil' one up in the biggest hug possible, even if he knows better than to do that without permission, particularly right now-)* Aizawa glances down at him again, mouth downturned and tension in his brow.

"Izuku, kiddo, we're going to have to start contacting your mother at this point-"

"Ah." He knows there's no point to asking his hero *not* to, and that will only make it seem like there's a reason he doesn't want his Mum contacted which, well, there is, but it's only because she's going to be so worried and she might faint or cry or-

"Kiddo, she's only going to be told that there was a villain attack, and that you received no lasting injuries worse than scrapes or bruises. As

she's a civilian, she can't officially know any more than that. If you choose to confide in her, however, there wouldn't be any repercussions."

"Unless she puts anything on social media," Hizashi adds on, voice serious yet eyes warm,
"Although I'm sure if she raised such an amazing lil' listener as yourself, that won't be a concern at all!" That has Izuku smiling wanly.

In fact, he allows himself to settle further back into the sofa, and nods his acknowledgement to Aizawa-sensei. The man, of course, picks up on every single layer of that simple nod *(okay, thank you, I'll be alright, it's fine, I understand what can and can't happen, what might happen, I feel safe, I trust you-)* and very slowly reaches over to tap Izuku's nose then ruffle his hair, hand settling perhaps a few moments longer than expected, all warmth and calluses against his scarred scalp.

Unfortunately, the moment can't last forever and Aizawa draws away, settling at his desk, perpendicular and set slightly back in the room from Izuku's sofa so that they can easily see each other still, and taps away at his computer for a few minutes, before grabbing out his mobile phone and inputting a number.

The first exchange is all explanations of who he is, of waiting for Izuku's Mum to be in a place where she can speak privately, which takes a couple of minutes wherein Izuku isn't entirely sure that he's quite fully present despite how his teacher comes back over to sit beside him, pins and needles in his fingers, clenched around their knife handle once more, staring at his hero's knees with minute comprehension.

He swims into halfway-coherency in time to listen to Aizawa-sensei explaining about how Izuku is going to get home *(and the teen is more than glad it won't be on the train, because he's uncomfortable with the idea of that, both as a result and in spite of not knowing what exactly will be said by the people around him-):*

"We have a policy of seeing students involved in any incidents home in person, so myself and Present Mic will be dropping your son home within the next hour. Would you be able to get back home for that timing, or would you need us to keep him at school a bit longer? Either is fine, so long as your son is safe."

"Oh, well-" Izuku blurs out again then, focused on the knife in his hand and Aizawa-sensei's knee pressed against his own, the quiet humming of Mic-sensei as he bustles around the faculty room, tucking papers and laptops and pencil cases into two messenger bags, one covered with an absurd number of pins and badges that clink whenever the flap is moved, only the barest glimpses of the canvas fabric visible amongst them, the other plain black leather with a single keychain of a cat hugging a banana. They suit his teachers very well.

And Izuku lets himself focus on picking apart some of the less obvious pin-provenances *(he's fairly sure that's a pre-Quirk band, something to do with the planet Pluto, and that one is definitely an original Midnight merch pin, then there's the cute dango one and that one looks like a photo-print, so maybe it's Choco-bun and Optician because it looks like the photos Mic-sensei was showing him earlier, even from a distance-)* and doesn't think beyond that.

Doesn't think about how stressed his Mum is going to be, how much he worries and burdens her, nor how inconvenient he's being by making his teachers drive him home, even though he knows Aizawa-sensei only considers it logical and Mic-sensei is always happy to help and-

"Hey, kiddo, we're going to drop you home as soon as. Your Mum explained the situation to her manager or someone, and she'll get back around the same time as us." Izuku startles a little, but doesn't panic, not when he knows that voice and cadence so well,

"O-oh, thank you." He gets a tiny frown in return, a single coil of capture weapon rising up to bop him across the nose,

"None of that shit, kiddo. And thanks, Sunshine." Well, rude,

"Hypocrite."

"Problem Child," Aizawa chides, sun-warm fondness overlaying any genuine chastisement, and Izuku dredges a smile up again then, in perfect timing for Mic-sensei to be leaning down, just out of reach of him, and beaming,

"So, you got a preference for car jams lil' one?" His smile settles into something more definite then, and he has a feeling that maybe he actually isn't imposing.

Really, it's no wonder Aizawa-sensei loves Mic-sensei so much.

The car ride is more comfortable than Izuku expected it to be, honestly. There's no awkward silences or stilted conversations, just Mc-sensei humming or singing along to a playlist of relatively calm songs, commenting on some random trivia about them occasionally, and Izuku simply watches the hands in his lap, or the rise-pause-fall-repeat of his hero's shoulders. It's grounding and pleasant. It's everything he needs to calm down prior to thinking about how he's going to calm down his Mum instead.

But then they're parking, according to the underground pro's instructions rather than Izuku's which earns a half-second eyebrow raise from Mic-sensei before the possibilities of the timeloops register with the blond, and Izuku starts to feel a bit anxious again. Aizawa turns to him, already about to ask if he's okay, but Izuku blurts out a half-thought question before the man can even speak,

"Aizawa-sensei, uhm, could I-" His hero waits for four breaths, a fifth, then reaches between the seats to poke Izuku in the side,

"What is it, kid?" The teen puffs out a long breath that has his fringe flying, before steeling something along the set of his jaw and planes of his shoulders.

"It's totally fine if you want to say no, but would you mind if I maybe had your capture weapon? I'm sorry, I know that's really forward, but you mentioned having two spares at home and I just can't- I don't know what I'm going to be like stuck at home-"

"Kid, Problem Child, Izuku, hush. It's fine. I trust you to give it back to me on Monday, or whenever I next see you." Even as he's speaking, the man is gathering up the coils of fabric-alloy in two hands, then piling them over his own head and settling them in his kid's arms, more than gratified to watch Izuku's entire body and expression seeming to relax that essential increment.

They spend the next minute getting the obnoxiously yellow rucksack out of the boot of their car, tucking the capture weapon in the top of it for the sake of not interrupting his mother's arrival with questions about it, and then they all settle down to wait. The music stays on, quiet but welcome, and nobody speaks, simply content to exist for a while. Izuku fiddles with one end of the capture weapon that he's kept poking out of the flap of his bag, and his eyes rest on the street ahead of the car, knowing that his Mum will come from the direction of the station.

It doesn't take much longer for her to arrive, perhaps only three songs, before her figure becomes clear, her pace hurried and hands already wringing.

Izuku, much to Aizawa's relief, doesn't hesitate to shove out of the car, and the kid rushes over to her, stopping halfway between her approaching figure and the heroes, glancing back at them in a cautious gesture that's slightly less relieving. Inko, for her part, steps halfway around him to look at them both as they also step out of the car but don't yet start walking over, the woman relaxing slightly at Hizashi's enthusiastic wave and Aizawa's nod, and then all of her attention falls firmly back on her son, wringing hands separating to flutter around his shoulders,

"Izuku! Oh, my baby, are you alright? Are you hurt? I heard the school was attacked and, oh, I can't believe this happened, I was so scared when I got the phone call from your teacher. And your skin- Izuku, baby, what happened?"

"Villains, Mum." Aizawa isn't sure about the blank tone to that, nor the complete lack of true information, but Inko seems genuinely worried, which is something.

"Oh, *Izuku."* The tears are audible, and then she's reaching out, gathering her son close, and Izuku curls into her, settling his arms low around the woman's waist. He doesn't hide his face in her shoulder though, instead meeting his teacher's gaze over his mother's shoulder, and Aizawa has a rather unpleasant thought that Midoriya Inko might not be what his kid needs.

But she's his mother, and he's her son, and Izuku hasn't said anything. Their flat is sufficient, from what Aizawa saw on the fourteenth morning. The Problem Child has clearly undergone some reasonable levels of trauma prior to joining UA, but if they're related to his mother then the kid's done a better job of masking it than most underground heroes would have been able to *(not like whatever's going on with him and Bakugou, but that can more than wait until they're both settled and grounded in every day life once more-)* so the hero's going to have to leave it for now. Izuku has his phone number memorised, and Aizawa knows where the kid lives, so it's not like his Problem Child is going to be cut off from him entirely. Aizawa's just going to have to trust his kid.

Eventually the two Midoriyas pull apart from each other, and Izuku accepts her hand on his cheek *(Aizawa sees the tiny twitch of his fingers towards the knife tucked into its sheath, the most minute of tilts away from a hand upon his face no matter how gentle it is)* even whilst he shifts away, moving past her to pause in front of Aizawa.

"We didn't break, Sensei," he murmurs, low and fraught. The hero can only offer a soft not-scowl in return,

"No, we didn't." Izuku is lurching forwards then, going up on to tiptoes to shove his face in the base of Aizawa's throat, arms too-tight around the hero's midriff. Whilst pressing the heel of his hand between Izuku's shoulder blades rather than patting his back, Aizawa realises that maybe he can't breathe properly, but the man doesn't actually mind it because he knows his kid is alive and breathing and alright and that's far more important than having oxygen in his lungs.

"Thank you," the kid murmurs, words muffled in the thick, dark fabric

of his jumpsuit, the few syllables reverberating through both of their chests.

"Always, kid. Call or text me if you need anything, anything at all, understood?" He keeps the words almost silent, barely spoken enough for Izuku to hear, because he doesn't want to put Inko's back up or offend her or anything. It's the last thing his Problem Child will need when she's already so blatantly worried.

They step back from each other then, knowing that the hug shouldn't last for longer even if they both wish it would, and the teacher returns to a normal volume,

"School is cancelled until next Monday, so I'd recommend staying at home and resting for the time being, alright? If you're training or otherwise pushing yourself, we'll be having words on Monday. Midoriya-san," he goes on, trying not to scowl with how she's already pulling Izuku close again, clutching onto his arm,
"Please ensure your son is looking after himself. If he needs any support, feel free to contact myself via my school email, or ring in to the school. We're happy to help however needed," Aizawa stresses, waiting until Inko meets his gaze and glad to find that she seems to be taking his words seriously, even whilst fussing over her son. Maybe things will be okay.

To be fair, it takes a few days for things to truly go wrong. Or rather, to escalate. Inko doesn't work for the first four days following the attack, pooling her sick days to be with Izuku whilst he isn't attending school.

It's the first day when he goes to bed as soon as they get home, not wanting food or a drink or company, which is understandable when he's been through something awful, except the few times that Inko peeks into his room, worried, she only sees him curled up on the floor with his blankets and duvet and pillows, along with some odd strands of a long off-white scarf, blinking at nothing. She has no idea why he doesn't want to sleep on his bed, but she's not going to push or press, not today anyway. So she looks in, and frets silently at him so very

still. She hasn't dared to ask about the attack, nor the knife that is in its case - what is it called, she can't remember, maybe a sheath? - on his belt. When she leaves a portion of katsudon just inside his door that evening, she returns in the morning to find it untouched, and Izuku awake. He's moved, sitting upright in his newly-built nest, laptop in his lap but no headphones on nor music playing like he would usually have for studying or researching things like his hero analysis.

This trend for no sleeping or eating or usual habits lingers like stubborn bloodstains under nails and in the creases of knuckles, and it's with those that Izuku spends the majority of the four days aimlessly wandering the flat or huddling up in his room, sleepless and unseeing, murmuring about aiming for the brain or the fingers or the neck. It's far beyond than worrying.

His phone is never out of reach, nor the fortunately-sheathed knife he's apparently been entrusted with, and he'll pull either out at seemingly random times, flinching from her or shadows or flickers of life outside the windows. Sometimes he rings his teacher, at any hour of the day or night, curling up with his phone pressed to his ear, fears falling from his lips even whilst he doesn't cry, one hand tucked under his shirt to grip something that she can't see.

Inko doesn't know what to do. For the first three and a half days, she tries to comfort him. She cooks more katsudon, or gives Izuku hugs, or simply sits with him and offers to listen to what happened. But she's a civilian, meaning that she isn't allowed to be told anything at all from official sources, just from her son himself, and Izuku only stares at her with a plastic smile and glass eyes when she asks, telling her not to worry, Mum, really, I'll get over it soon.

Except he's not getting over it. He's a half-remembered stranger who is floundering and flailing and drowning in what is supposed to be their home, and he won't speak a word of it to her, hanging onto his phone and knife like they're the only things in the universe that he trusts.

It hurts, but more than that it's worrying. It *scares* her. She wants the boy she doesn't recognise to be alright, because she knows that he won't miraculously disappear to reveal the bright-eyed little boy that loved All Might onesies and new notebooks and her more than anything else, who cried at the drop of a hat and had a single scar on his knee from falling down the building's stairs when he was three. No, this isn't *her* Izuku, and she doesn't even know how to make it better for the new Izuku.

With all of this haunting her mind and heart and soul, she rings Izuku's homeroom teacher after lunch on Sunday.

She takes the phone number from Izuku's phone, in the brief time he leaves it upon the dining room table because she asked him to wash the crockery from a lunch he ate four mouthfuls of, and she hopes that he won't mind but she doesn't want to do this over email, nor is she sure that the school will be allowed or willing to give her a hero's personal number.

With all of this, she inputs the number into her own phone, and lets Izuku know that she's just going to take a call before shutting herself in her bedroom.

"H-hello, is this Aizawa-san?" She can't help the hesitant tremble to her voice with the question, because for all she knows this could be illegal, and the voice that replies is a gruff rumble, blatantly unimpressed with being contacted,

"Who is this?"

But this is for her son, and for herself, and she's fairly sure that the voice is familiar as Aizawa-san,

"M-Midoriya Inko. Izuku's-"

"Sorry Midoriya-san, yes, it's Aizawa." Oh, that's a relief.
"Is the kid alright?" That question is less of a relief in some ways, although at least he seems immediately concerned,

"Yes? No? I- He's not *right,* although he's not physically hurt, if that makes sense?" She wishes she could be more eloquent about all of this, but she's close to panicking.

"It makes far too much sense, unfortunately. Is there anything I or the school can do?" That gets her back up a little, admittedly,

"I know he's been talking to you-"

"I apologise, Midoriya-san, if you're uncomfortable, but Izuku needs-"

"He needs to be better!" she cries, immediately biting her lip and eyeing her bedroom door, hoping she wasn't loud enough for Izuku to hear.

And she really didn't mean to sound horrible.

"I'm sorry, Aizawa-san. I- I didn't mean to be rude. I just- Oh, I don't know what to do for my baby," she whispers, the weight of a great secret in every syllable, something caught in a no man's land between shame and grief and frustration. And Aizawa, for his part, wants to help her, but he wants to help Izuku more.

He doesn't get the chance to try and offer any solutions though, because she's still speaking,

"I think I'm doing the wrong things, or maybe there aren't any right things to do. I've tried to research how to help a traumatised child but it's all for little ones or those who have gone through different things than I assume Izuku has and- and-" Aizawa can almost picture how her free hand must be tugging at her hair or clothing, anxious,

"I- I'm not quite sure how to deal with it all, I have to be entirely honest. Izuku and I... we haven't been very close for a long time because I'm working too much and he doesn't tell me about his problems, whether that's because of me or him or circumstances or all of it I don't know, and I- I don't know how to deal with it. With *this*. He- he's my baby boy and I'll always love him but all I see is a stranger. I can't help him-" Aizawa wants to shout at her. To rage and spit and hiss against this woman who can't appreciate what she has in her more-than-amazing son. Equally though, he's not going to lie to her and say everything will be fine, even if he genuinely wants to

because she's clearly suffering too, not when it's Izuku who truly needs all the support he can get.

"-I don't know what he needs, or how to be it. I can't protect him, from himself or from villains, and I just don't- "

"Midoriya-san," he interjects, not trying to necessarily interrupt but rather to redirect her,
"What can I do to help?"

His redirection apparently doesn't work though, because she lets out a wavering breath, gasps slightly on the inhale, and her words fall apart syllable by syllable when she talks again.

"I don't understand how my son can trust you so much so soon into the school year, but he told me which hero you are after the first day, and he's talked about you since he was seven." He doesn't have the time or headspace to be flattered right now, but the hero still tucks that knowledge away for later, and possibly gloat to Hizashi.

"-I know you have some very good statistics, and if Izuku trusts you this much there- there must be a *reason* behind it. Even if I can't see it." There's something the tiniest bit bitter to that, but it's more frustrated-bitter than cruel-bitter, and it's understandable, if not something Aizawa likes. He doesn't want the kid to be dealing with that, no matter in what measure. Izuku deserves better. The best.

"All I can honestly say, Midoriya-san, is that your son is incredibly strong, and very much possesses the heart of a hero. You already know that I can't tell you anything about the attack in an official capacity, but what I can say is that Izuku went through, as far as the students are concerned, a unique experience. An awful one."

"I don't know what to do with that, Aizawa-san," she murmurs, forlorn,
"I didn't want him to face the dangers of being a hero, even if he does have a Quirk now-" What an interesting tidbit that is, and another one to tuck away for later,

"-but I also couldn't tell him no when it's been his dream since before he could even say the word hero properly. I just- I want him to be happy, but I want him to be safe too." There's genuine anguish to her, the conflict of a mother pulled in several directions at once, and Aizawa can relate to a degree, because he's been teaching teenagers to be heroes for years now, and calling the job easy would be the most inaccurate of statements possible.

So Aizawa knows the problems of both protecting and pushing a child to become a responsible adult in a dangerous world. He also knows that there are few, if any, students that have ever had as much heroic potential as Midoriya Izuku. As much good-person potential. It needs and deserves nurturing, not stifling or judging or misunderstanding.

In that vein, Inko... he doesn't think that she's a bad person, or even a bad mother per se, but she's overwhelmed and underequipped. She's not what his Problem Child needs for that potential, nor for his recovery right now. And they both know it. Whether Izuku himself does as well, Aizawa isn't sure, but *they* both do, and that means they can make this work, whatever supports Izuku best without going against his wishes. Or not things that the kid isn't willing to at least try out for a time. Izuku deserves a say, an opinion, but he also deserves to have safety and understanding and support.

If Aizawa might be the one to provide that, then so be it.

Chapter End Notes

Firstly, there *is* going to be a FOURTH CHAPTER, although I won't be posting it for a fortnight or so because I'm going on an OS hiatus for two weeks starting on Monday and obviously I'll need to actually write it!! :D

I hope Inko comes across how I intended here! She isn't a bad mother necessarily, she was trying, but she didn't know what to do, how to help, and that was frustrating for her, which bled over

to her interactions with Zawa and Izu. She's far from what Izuku needs in this time and situation.

Oh, and if a few of these interactions, partic. between Izuku and Aizawa, feel familiar, that's because they are. They're both cycling interactions without even really meaning to, such as the "language" exchange. It's grounding, because repetition is something they're used to now, something that they still need in some measure, particularly if it's under their own control.

If anyone wants more clarification on the timeloop Quirk, lemme know!! I didn't want to go into too much detail because, you know, *flow* but if you're confused or want more info feel free to ask and I'll give you my best summary :D

Whew, anyway, hope you enjoyed the 13k that was meant to be 6 or 7 - lemme know what you thought!! What was your favourite part?
I think mine was probably Izu and Zawa lowkey cuddling in the debrief, or maybe the dadmic vibes whilst zawa had his statement!! Love to you all guys, and looking forward to finally replying to comments tomorrow/today - Ota. Xxx

Equilibrium

Chapter Summary

Equilibrium - "a state in which opposing forces or influences are balanced"; "a state of calm mind or physical balance".

(The fourth and final part to the first fic in the now-series!)

Chapter Notes

There's some wonderful art partway through this chapter, drawn by the absolutely wonderful Vee! https://www.instagram.com/xo.queenievee.art/

Oh, and any bold parts are in English!!

(also I haven't been able to edit this properly yet but I really wanted to post before I had to do real life stuff, so-)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta knew, oh how he *knew,* that he shouldn't have let Izuku just go home. But his kid is strong and brave and hadn't said a single word against it, even though there was so much discomfort obvious to him, and the man had hoped that his Problem Child would just talk to his mother, start setting up the therapy appointments that Nedzu had contacted all of 1-A's parents about, and that things wouldn't magically be okay but would instead begin to make progress towards recovery. Who knows, maybe having distance from the man he watched over and over again would even help Izuku.

But judging by the phone calls he's been picking up from Izuku, that hasn't been the case at all. The kid's been nervy and rambling, talking about Quirks and the class and the investigation to prolong the conversation without ever getting to the crux of the matter: Izuku isn't coping.

To be fair, Shouta himself is barely coping. The first time that Twig loafed on his chest, whiskers against his stubble, he'd nearly had a panic attack, and it had only been staring at the date and having his Sunshine hold him that proved him safe, that calmed the awful juddering of his lungs and sun-spotting of his vision. He has support from the love of his life who is familiar with trauma, and with *his* trauma, but Izuku doesn't have that. That much is clear from how whatever childhood trauma his kid has still affects him, how he reacts to Bakugou and triggers and all sorts of seemingly random things.

So, no, it's not a surprise that Izuku has been calling him, nor that with every one he's been sounding worse, another step further towards a ledge that Shouta hoped wouldn't even be within sight.

He hates it all.

Driving away from his kid's flat had his heart stilling, stone-hewn and desperately aching, and Hizashi had settled a hand on his thigh, fingers barely pressing in but palm firm, and stayed quiet, only the occasional hum to accompany the turned-down radio. It helps a bit, but doesn't stop Shouta from worrying. And the first time his phone rings to the number he doesn't have saved but does know off by heart, he had literally run across their living area, startling Choco-bun and nearly skidding onto his arse as he gets it to his phone and accepts the call.

"Kid, you alright?"

"Hey Sensei." The kid doesn't even have a nervous laugh to fill the slightly awkward hesitation before he speaks again,
"Uhm, yeh, I'm alright. I just- are you? Alright, that is?" Shouta would be lying to say that he relaxes a tiny bit then, in spite of the kid's clear stress.

"I am. I'm home, Sunshine is in the shower right now, I just startled Choco-bun so I'll probably have to give her part of whatever I eat for

dinner later else I'll feel guilty for the rest of my life, and Optician is glaring at me for it. Want me to send a picture of them?"

There's a long pause, three breaths that hitch and shudder and writhe with what might just be the strain of panic, but then there's something more solid, a single breath that isn't awful to hear, and Shouta can finally breathe again himself.

A reply follows this, a little too bright,

"You don't have to, Sensei!" Well, that's the closest thing to a 'yes please' that Shouta has ever heard for something that very much doesn't say those words.

"Izuku, kid, that wasn't the question." Another hesitation, but a softer one, gentle-edged and giving in,

"...Yes please?" The hero finally smiles at that,

"No problem, kid."

So maybe that first conversation hadn't been too bad. But with each successive one, the kid has only sounded more tired and trembly and just *wrong*.

Over the course of three and a half days, Shouta gets no less than twenty phone calls. He keeps his phone charged and within reach the whole time, not willing to be even half a second later to pick it up than necessary. It helps that Nedzu had contacted NightVeil on his part to get him taken off of active duty for a week minimum. Sure, it had grated a little, but also Shouta can admit that it's only logical to take a break after dying for a month straight. And Hizashi had looked so *relieved* when the email came through... Yeh, Shouta can't begrudge it. But the extra worrying time isn't ideal, not when it makes him want to fucking sob every time he hangs up from talking to his kid and just *knows* that his Problem Hero isn't doing well. And considering how much they've been through, the fact that he can barely help right now is more than a little soul-rending.

Then, of course, Midoriya Inko rings him on Sunday.

It's an awkward conversation, a stilted one. It raises a blurred heat-haze of rage and agony and bitter understanding in his chest, and the temptation to simply throw himself out of his home and onto the streets, to get to his Problem Child as quickly as possible, is more than strong. *(It echoes in his bones and blood, a Zeus-strewn tempest, the surge of need to be able to protect his kid more than overwhelming-)*

But Hizashi has his legs slung across Shouta's lap, toes wriggling along to the beat of whatever playlist he's putting together for the radio station, and that Shouta is more than used to getting spoilers for at this point, after years of listening to both the station and Hizashi organising future music for said station. And admittedly, his husband's toes are still now, his headphone around his neck and laptop abandoned onto the coffee table to let him lean forwards, the back of one hand pressed atop Shouta's thigh, beside his own ankles. *(They've both learnt, over the last few days, that the sudden presence of a hand against skin, particularly fingertips-first, is a sure way to have him flinching and fighting and so far from right that it hurts them both.)*

"Shou?"

He's clearly heard most of the conversation, and can undoubtedly feel the lightning-sharp tension arching through the underground hero's limbs, the desperation tightening his chest, and the blond presses his hand slightly more firmly against Shouta's thigh, emphasising Hizashi's presence. Yeh, he doesn't have to face this alone. Not like they had to before, when it was only him and Izuku against an eternal world.

"She's not enough. It's not her fault, but she's not. Izuku needs me." He pulls in half a breath, not letting Hizashi speak yet because he needs to move on, to give both himself and the kid a chance to grow above

and beyond this,
"He needs *us."*

"Alright. Are we picking him up today, or tomorrow?" Yeh, Shouta loves his husband - his soft, silly, smart Sunshine - very, very much.

"Can we go now?" The slightly vulnerable edge to that, a child-scared waver, isn't intentional, but Hizashi doesn't judge him for it, only shifting to curl more on top of the shorter man's lap, settling his forehead in the curve of Shouta's neck, feet pressed more firmly against his thighs, and the warmth and weight of it all is an absolute blessing, sunlight and joy personified into one single beautiful person.

And, even better, there are kind words being breathed against his skin, all careful consideration and offers,

"Of course, **love.** Want to pick up a snack or two on the way, maybe some strawberry milk for the lil' one?" And if he hadn't been sure that his husband liked the kid before *(he had, because it had been in the soft glances and the careful hands, the understanding words and distracting rambles-)*, that tiny glimpse of attention to detail would be more than telling.

At least this way he knows that Zashi isn't against him bringing a semi-random kid home, and possibly having him here for a good while. *(Shouta would be lying if he tried to deny that he kind of hopes Izuku might stay with them for a long time, so long as it's still what's healthy for Izuku.)*

"Thank you, Sunshine." The words are simple and easy, yet every syllable creaks the chasms through his heart the tiniest bit wider.

"**Always**, Shou."

They only stay like that for a few minutes though, neither wanting to leave Izuku too long when he needs support, and once Shouta is breathing deeply once more, Hizashi presses a kiss to his neck, a moment of ridiculously tender affection, before unfolding himself

from the shorter man's lap. It doesn't even take five minutes to get themselves out of the door, getting into the car to pick up something from a corner store on the way, and then to get his Problem Child. Hopefully, Izuku will become *their* Problem Child.

Equally, it doesn't take long to get to the kid's apartment, which may or may not be because Hizashi edges the line of what he's legally allowed to do on the roads in a non-emergency, although they do stop off at a corner store for the aforementioned strawberry milk, plus one of Shouta's favourite juice pouches just to give him something else to focus on for a few minutes of the final half of the drive, and then Hizashi is parking a bit questionably in the small car park attached to the apartment building, taking up a space that doesn't have any scuffmarks and so is hopefully relatively unused, because he doesn't want to leave their car unattended on the street during the early afternoon.

"Alright to go straight up, Shou?"

"Definitely," he returns, not quite meaning to let a curve of relieved eagerness round out the single word.

Hizashi doesn't judge though, only reaching out, palm-up and open-ended, an offer so genuine and comfortable that Shouta doesn't even hesitate to slip their hands together, squeezing just-steady fingers around a warm palm.

However, they both let go soon enough, because there was no point to hurrying here if they just linger now, and Shouta leads the way up the stairs, headed for the door that he has left exactly one, in a reality that wasn't quite the same as this one. He knocks in a pattern that the kid might not even recognise, unless he hears all of it and truly thinks, yet it's one that Shouta can't help but default to all the same because it's a tiny snippet of a dying heartbeat, one that he has memorised from hearing it eleven times in this exact stuttering rhythm.

The door is open within a few moments, Midoriya Inko managing a wan smile as she open the door and steps to the side, the sound of

hurried footsteps in the background, a child with matted hair and a hand upon a hilt sticking out of his belt rushing towards the door. He freezes though, upon seeing who is there and waiting.

"Aizawa?" There are darting eyes and even more quick steps, Izuku suddenly right in front of him, one hand slightly raised, barely a few inches from his side but distinct all the same. Accordingly, the hero doesn't hesitate, not when Izuku has given such blatant, if silent, permission, and he grasps the kid's hand in return, the tackiness of half-dried blood felt by both of them, even as nobody can see it. If both of them sway slightly closer to each other, drawn in by the gravity of *heresafeokaytogether,* then neither Hizashi nor Inko call them out on it. They wouldn't quite know how to.

"Hey, kid. Midoriya-san," he greets, squeezing Izuku's hand lightly. Neither of them particularly realise how they're both shifting slightly to stand almost shoulder to shoulder in the genkan, set against the world once more.

"Aizawa-san. I-" she pauses, the beginnings of a waver in her voice being dissolved into a thin steadiness,
"Would you both like to come in for a cup of tea?"

"If you're amenable, Midoriya-san," Hizashi interjects, soft-toned and smiling a little already, peering over his husband's shoulder.

"Yes, yes, of course. Izuku, b-baby, why don't you take our guests to the sofa? I'll bring myself a chair over in a minute." Every single one of them know that the way that Izuku just nods, not even protesting that he can help, and tugs Shouta along by the hand, glancing up at Hizashi with something verging on warmth to his eyes, slightly hazy though they might be, is very much telling of the kid's mental state. The poor listener looks exhausted.

Shouta pauses the kid long enough to shove his boots off though, Hizashi doing the same, and then they follow the teen over to the sofa. Shouta doesn't take the seat he took last time *(technically he never took it, but he remembers the give of the worn cushions, the softness of the slightly ragged brown blanket-)* and instead ends up in the centre of the two cushions, thigh to thigh with both his husband and his Izuku, and

he nudges the kid to face them both even though it squashes their knees together slightly painfully.

Izuku looks *ill.*

It's not the very worst state Shouta has seen him in, for certain, but it's still a sight that twists at his guts, raking nails against his chalkboard spine, because Izuku's hands are trembling faintly, there's a slight catch to his breathing that comes of something being too tight around his chest, and the expression on his face... It's wrong. There's the pallor of bones, and an inky blankness that reminds Shouta painfully of their fourteenth morning, when the kid had nearly broken, and it's honestly just miserable.

And despite all of that, he's managing to smile, an ugly, awful thing but a smile all the same.

"You've been doing worse than you said, haven't you." It's not even a question any more, because they both know the answer, have both known the answer for the last few days, yet it needs saying all the same. Because they've been honest with each other for the first twenty eight days, or rather once they knew they were looping together, and the hero can't let that change now, not when they finally have the chance to recover and move past it all.

"Sorry, Sensei."

"Fuck, kid, don't be, we've said this before," Shouta grumbles, poking just above the kid's knee, slipping a hand beneath his shirt to loosen the capture weapon slightly, and ends up with his Problem Child gripping at his hand again, their unseen bloodstains aligning once more.

"And I've said language before," Izuku chides, some actual substance creeping into his smile, and that feels even better than seeing the kid in the first place had.

"Why are you here, Aizawa?" It's slightly harsh, probably harsher than it was meant to be, and there's a slight gasp from the direction of the kitchen, where Inko is looking at all three of them with wide eyes. But Shouta doesn't have the time or attention for that, not when his kid looks vulnerable.

"Because you're not doing well. You're going to have to tell me to leave you alone if you want me not to act on my worries, kid." Both of them know that Izuku won't say that, but he wants and needs to offer it anyway.

It takes a few blinks and breaths, but then the kid nods, murmuring a quiet thank you, and they all settle back down. Inko, from where she had stuttered to a stop over by the kitchen entrance, starts moving again, a chair in her hands and her Quirk supporting a tea tray. She ducks her head in vague re-greeting to them all.

"I- I hope you don't mind jasmine tea."

"That sounds lovely! Thank you ever so much Midoriya-san!" Hizashi chirps, bright in tone and expression, and it puts everyone a little more at ease. Thank Nedzu for his Sunshine.

"Of course! And, uhm, call me Inko, please." Her smile is timid, yet even then it doesn't have the shadows that Izuku's did only a few literal weeks ago, upon first turning up in Shouta's classroom.

"Thank you, Inko-san. You can call me Hizashi, if you want! A bit less of a mouthful than Present Mic, ya know?" The blond laughs, and her smiles solidifies,

"Ah, if you're sure!"

"No worries at all, Inko-san. How have you been holding up, with everything?" he asks, even as he accepts a steaming mug of tea with a smile.

Shouta and Izuku, for their part, stay quiet, listening in and watching the interaction. How Hizashi puts Inko at ease, how she watches all three of them with concern but not with regret or resentment, how the

steady heat and breathing of each other, knee to knee and shoulder to shoulder, helps soothe a restless ache that neither of them had truly realised was so painful.

"As well as expected, I suppose," she manages, cutting a mournful glance back over to Izuku, and Shouta abruptly realises both how much she cares, and how little good it's doing the kid.

Hopefully that means that intending to bring Izuku home with them today is a good decision rather than a bad one.

They all settle down a bit then, sipping at tea together, before Inko speaks up again,

"Uhm, Izu-kun, there's a reason I asked your teacher to come over."

"You asked them over." The kid winces at his own flat tone, but doesn't take it back or change it. It's just another reminder that he's not quite himself.

"Y-yes. I just thought that they might be able to help you? M-more than I can at least." There's a fracturing to those words, a fluttering discomfort, and it has Izuku frowning even more, leaning forwards a bit. It only highlights the paleness of his skin as he shifts in relation to the warm light of the room.

"Kid," Shouta interrupts, not unkind but not liking how both of the Midoriyas seem to be breaking further word by word.
"We want you to come home with us."

"Me? With you two?" It's still flat, not even disbelief or relief or anything else they might have expected creeping in, and that feels so very wrong that all of the adults exchange glances. Not one of them says anything about, when Hizashi starts to speak, Izuku pulling out the knife that he has kept sheathed on his person this entire time, tumbling and turning it between his fingers, tremble dissipating with

his half-focus on something so familiar and rhythmic. Something so safe. But the rest of his attention does go to the blond as he speaks,

"That's right, lil' one. You don't have to, but we thought it might be good, ya know?" Hizashi offers, tone as soft as a kitten's belly and equally as vulnerable. It has Izuku's shoulders sagging.

"Oh."

The teen is clearly processing at this point, and so the heroes and his Mum fall quiet again, giving him the time and space needed.

It pays off, because by the time their tea is done and three of their cups are settled back on the tea tray, Izuku is looking up at the three of them with an almost-wild gaze, all brambles dripping in rain that's a tad too dark to be water.

"And it's only because you think I need help?" It catches between the thorns of accusation and weakness, leaving it conflicted, weary and wary. Inko is already tearing up in return, voice shuddering,

"Izuku, baby, I just- I- don't know how to stop- how to stop you falling apart."

"But I'm no-" He cuts himself off, going to bite at his lip before Shouta nudges him lightly in the side, silently reminding him not to. It works, even whilst Izuku ends up frowning instead, seemingly to himself with how he's staring down at his lap.

"Uhm, I- I'm just going to make some more tea," Inko says, words rushed and tumbling, and she pushes to her feet with wide eyes and the barest traces of a wan smile. Hizashi stands as well, staying stooped so that he's only a foot or so taller than her, hands already on the tea tray,

"Ah, Midoriya-san, mind if I help?" She pauses, just for a fraction of a second, eyes flitting over her son and the underground hero, before she bites her lip and nods.

With that, Hizashi scoops up the tea tray from the coffee table and follows the nervous woman to the kitchen, leaving his husband and their kid to it. *(Maybe Hizashi shouldn't be thinking of Midoriya-san's son as their own, particularly not when they're here to take Izuku with them, but he also knows that their intention isn't to take her son, only to give the lil' listener another safe space, more people to turn to and rely upon for anything and everything he might need-)*

Izuku waits for them both to be out of earshot before he turns fully to Shouta, hunching in on himself a little, their knees still pressed together but the kid literally drawing away from him. Something vicious rips through Shouta's chest with that fact but he doesn't give in to it because this is Izuku's moment, not his. He needs to help the kid first.

His hurt remains, even as the kid starts to speak, voice almost quieter than even Shouta could hear,

"Why am I coming with you?" The vulnerability creases further into the aches of his heart, shuddering with dug-in claws, because he hates his Problem Child sounding so rent-apart, even as he sympathises with it. Understands it.

"Because I don't think you're doing well in here right now, are you?" The kid can't answer, and that's more telling than anything else.

It takes more breaths than the man can be asked to actually count, the sound of a tap starting in the kitchen area, before Izuku pokes at Shouta's side, not quite vicious but more of a combination of frustration and wanting full attention.

"Aizawa, you can't think- I- She isn't a bad Mum! She just- we-" Fuck, he can't let the kid get that impression, because that's the last idea he wants Izuku to garner, because the kid needs every bit of support and care he can get, from his mother included.

"Kid, I promise I'm not saying your mum's bad, or cruel, or a failure, nor am I saying that *you're* a problem in this equation." He emphasises that even more heavily, because if there's one thing he needs Izuku to understand, it's that none of this his fault or a problem in that sense.

And he knows his Problem Child, knows how easily the kid blames or implicates himself for things like this, and that's the last thing Shouta wants right now.

"What I *am* saying is that you deserve more support than she can provide, and Zashi and I can and want to give you that support, if you're willing to accept it. Nothing about this is a no-choice thing," he adds on,
"-nor is it permanent. We're just trying to give you as many options as possible, Izuku. You're not a helpless child, but that doesn't mean that you can't accept help. You're my Problem Hero, Izuku, and I'm not letting you break now."

Neither of them speak for a long moment after that, blinking at each other, and the tension leaches from the kid gradually, then all at once in a rough exhalation and closed eyes.

"I- okay. Thank you, Sensei." He shifts closer again, and that fact means more than the words themselves, although the gratitude also helps soothe some of the pain in his chest, heart shuddering against his ribs with something less hurt and more content.

"Always, kiddo," he vows, steady and certain. He doesn't let the crushing gravity of that promise linger though, pressing his weight slightly more heavily against the kid in lieu of it, tone light in return, "Oh, and keep the capture weapon for now, alright? I'll take it back later." There's a three-breath silence between them, one of understanding, where they both know and share every layer of depth beneath that, before Shouta speaks again,

"And, hey, at least you'll get to meet the cats, kiddo." Izuku manages a shaky smile then, tucking himself further into the hero's side, and Shouta doesn't hesitate to sling his arm around almost-trembling shoulders,

"Do you think they'll like me?"

"I *know* they're going to like you," Shouta retorts, a soft sort of

Cheshire grin making itself known, and they're able to both relax, a calloused hand coming up to rough through green curls as Izuku giggles.

It's the perfect sight for Inko and Hizashi to walk back into, even if it hurts something in the woman's heart, because for their loved ones who have been struggling so much to now be smiling together, a soft laugh filling the room... It's more reassuring than words could say.

Still though, nobody is quite ready to pull the Midoriyas apart just yet, so there's some quiet conversation about school, mostly generic things like favourite subjects or silly stories that Hizashi shares, skirting around anything that might be too triggering for anyone, and it eases them all enough to eventually have Izuku leaving the room to pack some of his things, only a faint edge of reluctance to him. It gives the adults the time to discuss a few specifics, which really just means assuaging Inko's concerns about their living situation and her being able to contact or find them and vice versa. It doesn't regard any actual decisions, because Shouta, for one, wouldn't be comfortable doing that without Izuku in the room. The kid should be able to lean on all of them for support, but that doesn't mean that he can't be part of the decisions.

He's certainly mature and intelligent enough for it, the last month has proved that much.

But they reassure Inko as much as they can, and when Izuku appears again with a duffel bag full of things and his school bag slung over his shoulder, stuffed to the brim, Shouta and Hizashi exchange a glance. It both seems like too much and too little to be bringing with him, but it's not like they can't bring the kid back to pick up more stuff, or that there isn't the money to buy him things that he's missing or doesn't have enough of, so it's probably fine.

"Want me to take that, lil' one?" The limelight hero offers with a tiny smile and genuine warmth in his tone, trying to make it clear to the

kid that he means it.

"Oh! Thank you," Izuku manages, smiling shyly up at Hizashi as the blond stands and slowly extends a hand, palm-down, to take the duffel from him. Meanwhile, Shouta lets his eyes linger on Inko briefly, on how she takes in the scene between his two people with twisted lips, trembling hands, and resolution in her gaze. Good. She cares, but more about Izuku than herself. *(That isn't to say that she doesn't need and deserve support and help and attention, but she's an adult, and she can seek that out for herself, perhaps with UA's help. Shouta's here for Izuku's sake and Izuku's alone.)*

Satisfied that Inko is truly going along with this, had suggested it in the first place, for the right sort of reasons, Shouta pushes to his feet and levels Izuku with a steady look, taking in the details of the kid, trying to ensure that this isn't going to be a bad decision for him. And, for all that there's nerves to him, a shiver in his spine, Izuku stares steadily back, and takes a step towards him, the beginnings of a smile warming the paleness of his face. Good.

"Let me take your other bag for now?"

"Thanks, Shouta." There's that deliberate name choice again, one that puts them close together, that affirms their familiarity and equality to each other. Recognising that, sharing it, Shouta reaches out to rap gentle knuckles atop the kid's head, resting them there for just a few seconds too long,

"Always, Izuku."

They all start to leave then, everyone slipping shoes on, and the two husbands deliberately walk ahead of the Midoriyas as they all head down the stairs and for the carpark. If Izuku ends up with a hand in Shouta's top all the same then nobody calls him out on it.

"We'll let you say goodbye to your mum, alright? We're literally just going to sit in the car."

"O- Okay." Izuku still takes another second to unlatch his hold on Shouta's top, but he does, and the two heroes walk over to the car, only resisting the urge to look over their shoulders thanks to the warped reflections of mother and son on the side of their car.

They can't hear the quiet words, but have no doubts as to what is being said, exchanges of worries and apologies and well wishes, see you soon and look after yourself, and the love yous spoken quietest and fiercest of all. As they both get in, the sight of Izuku and Inko hugging can be seen out of the corner of their eyes, and they exchange a relieved glance of their own. Things between the Midoriyas certainly aren't broken. No, they're just strained and warped and twisted. But that can be recovered, for all that it's likely to never be exactly the same. That being said however, sometimes change can be good, and if they both come out stronger and happier for it by the end, then hopefully the awful stage will be worth it.

Meanwhile Izuku, hugging his Mum, feels overwhelmed and blank all at once. *(It's in the roiling heat in his gut, the glimmer of nerves-sharp energy sparking and arching through his marrow. The tension, spring-tight and aching, that lances at every muscle.)* Her touch is familiar yet it isn't quite safe, nor is it unsafe either, and the dichotomy of the person who's supposed to love him most not actually feeling safe but not outright being a problem either hurts more than he can really comprehend. It's just *wrong.* And not the sort of wrong that can be fixed with a knife or snarled words or a clever plan, not the sort of wrong that he really knows how to deal with now.

Izuku isn't entirely sure he knows how to be anything but a hero any more.

But he can try *(has been trying-)* and so he holds her carefully, not letting a single iota of his acid-buzzing Quirk free, and breathes in the smell of her pomegranate shampoo and outside air, and forces himself to try and switch off his brain for a minute. It doesn't entirely work, but it's enough. He returns her kind, soul-aching words and manages to actually mean them, and if his steps to the car are more firm than his hug was, then it's not something that he has any control over or thought to. No, he just confirms that the boot is shut on his belongings, and reaches for the door that matches the seat he took only a few days ago, for all that it feels like an age.

"Heya, lil' one, dunno if you're hungry at all but there's some strawberry milk and mochi in the back there if you want them!" It's warmth that greets Izuku upon opening the door to the back of his teachers' car, and it settles some of the ache inside his chest, stilling his trembles and staying some of his runaway thoughts. He's safe here.

Then he's settled properly in his seat, everyone has their seatbelts on, and he's got strawberry milk in hand without particularly thinking about it, sipping at it with a hand still caught around the hilt of their knife and mind in the tightness of his hero's capture weapon around his chest. It's been helping more than most things. *(So many things have been the opposite of helpful; even just sitting on the edge of his bed had Izuku's chest tightening, much like taking his place at their small dining table, where he's eaten too many breakfasts that tasted of iron-tainted dust because he's just preparing to die again, the same day except it's not-)* But he's got a tasty drink and the car is rumbling as Shouta's Sunshine turns the engine on, ready to drive them away *(drive them home-)* so Izuku just sinks into his seat and finally lets himself relax.

Shouta twists around in his seat no less than ten minutes later, reaching out for the half-drunk carton of milk before it can spill to the floor, and if he pauses, able to properly look at Izuku and assess the eyebags, the pallor to his skin and tangle of his matted hair, then he doesn't like what he sees. Except he also does. Because the kid's eyes are closed in calm rest, his chest is rising and falling in steady breaths, and he tilts further and further towards the window with every tenth heartbeat. He clearly needs the sleep, so hopefully it will do him some good.

"I think we've done right, **love,**" Hizashi murmurs, as quiet as when he breathes words against Shouta's skin on early weekend mornings and just as tender,
"He looks happier."

"I hope so," he sighs, glancing back around at the kid behind them.

Hizashi catches on to his concern immediately, of course, because he's *Hizashi,*

"Let's just give ourselves a chance, yeah? You two may or may not have school tomorrow, if you're not both feeling too rough in the morning, so let's just take it until then, don't you think?"

"Sounds logical," Shouta grumbles, for all that it's closer to a petulant purr than any thunder-rumble.

"Didn't you know my husband's the most logical man around?" Hizashi teases, glancing over at him briefly with wiggling eyebrows and a bright grin, and it eases that final bit of tension that had been arching along Shouta's spine, tight around his ribs.

"Maybe," he grumbles instead, and if he reaches over to briefly squeeze Hizashi's leg in silent gratitude for the reassurances, then his husband doesn't call him out on it.

A good quarter of an hour later, the husbands exchange a glance and know it's time to get the kid moving again. Whilst they very much don't want to wake Izuku up from a seemingly restful sleep, they've been parked at their own apartment complex for ten minutes already, and they want to get Izuku in and settled.

Equally though, letting Izuku wake up in a completely unfamiliar environment that he doesn't remember getting to, regardless of familiar people being with him or not, sounds more than inadvisable, so Shouta gets out of the car as quietly and carefully as he can and steps back to open the kid's car door, delicate so as not to let Izuku slump even further over regardless of his seatbelt. Then he sinks into a crouch, and abruptly decides not to try and shake the kid awake. It doesn't usually do him or other heroes any favours to be woken as such, and Izuku was already traumatised enough before the last month. So, no shaking awake, but that doesn't mean that he can't reach up to gently tug at a curl, voice low and soothing,

"Hey, Izuku, kiddo, we're here. You want to wake up for me?"

"Mmh." The grumbled noise is cute, almost like a kitten, which obviously doesn't make Shouta soft at all, nor Hizashi, judging by the absolutely molten look he gets from his Sunshine, yet somehow not as cute as green eyes, all dewy ferns, blink with heavy lids and a reaching-up hand that rubs at them with his knuckles.

It's a tad rough though, movements no doubt drowsiness-slurred, and Shouta reaches up again to poke lightly at the kid's wrist,

"Hey, gentle on yourself there Problem Child. You're tired, not silly." There's a pout then, accompanying a half-hearted glare,

"Mm bu' you's sill'." Shouta can't help but snort, knuckles slipping down to settle against Izuku's knee, rapping a soft, heartbeat-staccato rhythm there,

"Sure I am, mister trip-over-nothing."

"'s mean."

"Perhaps," Shouta allows, but they're both smiling tiny, fragile things that crack along the edges yet are warm-hearted above all else.

"Right, let's go listeners! We've got a home waiting for us," Hizashi chirps, bounding out of his seat with enough force for the car to rock slightly, and he's already round to opening the boot by the time Shouta and Izuku have got the kid's seatbelt off and he's staggering to tired feet, Shouta's hand on his back keeping him steady.

He's mostly recovered by the time Hizashi has closed the boot and reaches out for his things, expression insistent. It's the murmured please that has the blond crumbling though, compromising by giving the kid his rucksack back, keeping the heavier duffel bag to carry for himself. It leaves Shouta to lead the way up the stairs of their apartment complex, Izuku in between him and Zashi because obviously they're not slightly worried that the kid might just collapse. Admittedly, with his power nap in the car he seems far more bright-eyed, but the point remains. A fall down the stairs is the last thing any of them need or want.

Luckily, there aren't any falls, nor even trips or stumbles, and they get up to the third floor without incident. Shouta pauses by the front door, keys in hand, and turns to face them both, standing at an angle so that neither he nor Izuku have their backs completely open, doubly

so with Hizashi standing there as well.

"You alright to meet the cats, kid, or do you want us to gather them up for a bit whilst you get settled?" he offers, perfectly neutral.

"Choco-bun, Optician and Twig, right?" He asks, as though he didn't already know. Is it procrastination? Undoubtedly.

"That's the babies!" Hizashi chirps, as bright as can be yet soft with it, all Sunshine rather than Present Mic.

"I'll be fine," Izuku decides.
"Thank you," he tacks on, because he's genuinely grateful that Shouta is trying not to overwhelm him. They both know how, after the same day and people and surroundings over and over again there's something oh-so awful about too many new things at once. But he kind of knows the cats, if only tangentially, and he has faith in Shouta and his husband to not have him somewhere awful. Well, it is their home.

"Follow Shou then, lil' one." There's no pressure, an easy, comfortable comment, all gentle curves and affectionate warmth, and Izuku manages a smile in return, shifting his rucksack on his shoulder as Shouta clicks the front door open.

There is immediately a cat skittering over to them, a short-haired, sleek thing, colourpoint darkening her paws and face and tail except for her salmon pink nose, and Izuku recognises Twig the moment he sees her.

"Hi, Twig," he murmurs, crouching down and offering her a hand to sniff. Hizashi stays behind him, and Izuku can't see it but there's a soft expression on the blond's face, ridiculously fond and sweet. It melts Shouta's heart, to have both of his precious people right here and happy with each other, in their home.

"Told you she'd like you," Shouta teases, and the fiery little glare he gets in return is one hundred percent the kid he has known for the last month. It's reassuring to see.

"Right, come on, out of the genkan kid. Zashi, pass me the bag?" The blond passes the larger bag of Izuku's belongings over the kid's head, even as Izuku scoops up Twig, who has reared up to press her front paws to his knees. It's nothing short of adorable.

With the kid's stuff in hand, his own boots abandoned to the side of the genkan, and content that Hizashi will keep Izuku moving along, Shouta ambles further into their home, going to dump the duffel bag on the foot of the kid's bed. He won't unpack for him because he doesn't want to invade the kid's privacy when they're already pulling him out of his home for their own *(logically, he knows that it needed to be done, and equally that Izuku doesn't seem to resent them for it, but it doesn't help the tiny bit of guilt still lingering, leaden in his guts-)* and the room isn't really ready for Izuku anyway, so it's all a bit of a mess, but that's alright for now. He's got a clean bed and an empty wardrobe, for all that the desk still has a box and a few piles of paperwork on it.

They can sort something out after school in the next few days, or worst ways enlist Nemuri to help them grab some things for Izuku. Whatever's most logical at the time. For now, Shouta goes to grab two blankets and some towels, clean out of the cupboard, for Izuku as well, and ends up pausing in the hallway, watching Hizashi and Izuku standing together at the end of it, facing the living room. Hizashi is beaming, hands low to his sides but still gesturing excitedly as he explains something about the telly, Izuku nodding along with a faint smile and ever-brighter eyes, questions upon his lips. The underground hero, for his part, is more than content to scoop up Twig when she wonders over and simply lean against the hallway wall, watching on. *(His heart thumps and swells and blossoms with every moment, daffodils and tulips and sunflowers sprouting bold and beautiful. This moment might not be perfect, but it doesn't need to be, not when he has his precious ones with him. They make it perfect all by themselves.)*

"Ah, sorry, I derailed!" His Sunshine suddenly exclaims, turning around to gesture Izuku towards Shouta,
"Shou, you gonna show the lil' one the rest of the flat? I'll start dinner," he goes on, expression remaining light and easy.

"Sure, Zashi. Kid, this is your room-" he starts, standing upright and letting Twig jump out of his arms when she protests the movement. It just means that he has a hand free for Izuku, after brushing their knuckles together and getting no flinch or rejection, to clasp ahold of. It allows him to gently tug the kid down the short hallway, showing him the bathroom, he and Hizashi's bedroom, and that there's spare pretty-much-everything in the storage cupboard. Then he circles back, as it were, to their guest bedroom, leading the kid fully inside.

"It's yours now, Izuku. For as long as you want it, and after that too." The words are spoken in an almost-undertone, low and so sincere as to pull at his tongue, hurting just a little, because he needs his kid to understand this, to know that he always has a space with them.

"You don't- You shouldn't have to-" It isn't quite panic to Izuku's *everything,* but it's something akin to it, pulse racing and words trembling like horses ready to run, wild-eyed, and Shouta won't have it. No, he squeezes his hand around the kid's, twice, a third time *(neither of them consider the silent message in that, the three syllables of three words that neither would yet say but both would mean-),* and steps slightly closer, knees bending to look Izuku properly in the eyes.

"Izuku, kid, we just went through almost literal hell together. The only way I'm letting you go now is if you very logically push me away, and even then I'll keep this room for you all the same, understood?"

Everything stills for a second-minute-hour, caught in ice with dark eyes against green, and if either of them are breathing then it goes entirely unnoticed.

Then it shatters, the world blurring back into heart-thumping motion, and Izuku is helpless but to throw himself forwards, crashing into Shouta's chest with wide arms and shuddering chest. He would bury his face in the man's capture weapon except it's still wound around his chest, so he makes do perfectly happily with breathing into his top instead, up on his tiptoes and turning his head just enough to hide away from the world in his hero's neck.

And, in return, there are strong arms circling his back. There isn't a hand to cradle his head, but they both know that's for the better *(neither of them will ever forget how it feels to have their faces smashed into concrete by a too-large hand until they're broken in body and mind-)* and instead he gets Shouta twisting his head just enough to lay his silver-patched jaw atop his head, stubble catching against curls. They breath together, slightly too jagged and catching yet in sync all the same, and their arms are tight, fingertips never pressing in.

"You've done so well, kid, and we didn't break. Half of that's down to you, my Problem Hero, and I'm never going to forget that. Got to keep the good bits as well as the bad." Izuku gasps something like an agreement against his throat, and sinks impossibly further against him. Maybe his legs will start to tremble with being on tip-toes and exhausted, and maybe Shouta will have to try not to choke on all of the half-words that his heart presses up against his lips, but that's alright because the man can lean back a little, taking some of the kid's weight, and Izuku can murmur quiet thank yous for them both, and they can both know, with every shivering piece of themselves and each other, that things can only go up from here and that, together, they'll make sure of it.

Sooner or later though, there's a soft knock on the door and Hizashi peeking around, half of his hair tied up now but the rest still waterfall-tumbling around his shoulders, a curtain of pure sunshine, and it matches the soft smile on his face.

"You two alright in here?"

"Not too bad," Shouta replies, only just pitching his voice above a grumble, and it takes both him and Izuku another long moment before they start to pull away from each other, the man pausing with his hands bracketing Izuku's arms, just studying his face for a long second.

Then, apparently satisfied, he squeezes lightly before letting go all together, taking a single step over to the clean towels that he'd dumped on the edge of the desk earlier.

"You going to shower, kid?" Shouta asks, rather pointedly reaching up to ruffle the matted curls, because he can tell that the kid hasn't showered since he got home, or at least not properly, because whilst

he doesn't stink or anything, his hair isn't exactly at its fluffiest, and the hero has zero doubt that Izuku felt too on-edge and paranoid to be able to put himself in such an indefensible position for any length of time. Which, whilst completely understandable, also can't continue.

Of course, the kid knows every layer of that, understands it all intrinsically with their shared gaze, but he only rolls his eyes, shrugging a shoulder,

"Subtle, Aizawa."

"Go and shower," he grumbles, soft eyes belying the grumpy rumble.

"Sir, yes sir." The verging-on snark has the man grinning, Cheshire-edged but soft-centred, and he gently shoves at the kid's shoulder, holding out a towel with the other.

Then said kid is grabbing some clothes from his bag and gone, slipping past Hizashi with a smile and shutting the door on the bathroom with a towel and clothes in hand. Admittedly, the door opens again only ten seconds later, an only slightly disgruntled cat being ushered out before it closes again, a quiet snicker accompanying the scene, and it has the husbands exchanging a single glance, achingly fond already. Izuku very much has a place in their home and hearts, no doubt about it.

But they don't allow themselves to linger for too long, because they've both got things to do. Shouta takes up a place at one of the bar seats so that he can be close to Hizashi and see down their hallway whilst he works on revising the timetables and lesson plans for this year. If his class are being targeted *(and of that there's no doubt because villain groups are known for retaining grudges and his kids are going to be at risk from that-)* then he needs to prioritise them being able to look after themselves above all else, so some of the basics are going to need streamlining, maybe he can fit in some extra training sessions but he can't overwork them either, so perhaps pulling some Physical Education lessons over to Heroics basics as well-

"Shou?"

"Hm?" He pulls himself away from his computer, looking up at his husband, the blond holding up a spoon of something for him.

"Alright?" There's a double meaning to that, they both know, though neither address it directly.

Shouta takes the spoon instead of answering, savouring the taste of the beef and veg stew that he's tasting whilst ignoring the concern for a long second, gathering himself.

"Tastes good. Maybe more salt?"

"Sure." Hizashi doesn't press again, leaving Shouta to settle in his thoughts before confiding in him.

"My class are in danger and so is Izuku and I need to sort out their schedules and lessons somehow to help them deal with that, and I need to talk to Hound Dog to sort out preliminary sessions for them all, and that'll definitely lead to more sessions needed so I need to talk to Nedzu to make sure that the list of possible longer-term therapists is updated and will be prepared to deal with up to twenty new students amongst them. Then-"

"Shouta." The serious tone has the shorter man quieting instantly, staring up at his husband with slightly wide eyes.

"Shou, **love, no.** You can't think like that." He opens his mouth to protest, but Hizashi is already reaching out, leaving an open palm upon the counter for him to take.

And Shouta, despite how he's frowning, slips their hands together, clasping wrist-to-wrist, and in a low, steady tone, Hizashi speaks again,

"Yes, all of that needs doing, I'm not denying it, but be logical about it. What needs doing today, what needs doing this week, what just needs doing this month? Take it day by day, **love,** and remember that you're not the only one here, yeah? You know Nedzu will do whatever it takes to protect us and the kids, and so will I."

All of that is true. All of it is logical and sensible and perfectly reasonable, and it resonates with the hero within Shouta, even as the traumatised man inside of him feels about ready to throw a fit.

But he's with his Sunshine, and his Problem Child can still be vaguely heard in the shower, and so he lets himself push away the illogical side for the time being, until he can work through it healthily, and instead he squeezes Hizashi's wrist, sinking into the heartbeat pressed against his palm. He does have to be careful, to take things slowly, but he can also trust in himself and the people around him to take on parts of that, to help him in protecting his kids and Izuku.

So Shouta breathes for a minute, then shoos Hizashi away with a tiny, crooked smile that tells more of his gratitude than any words could. The blond leans over to kiss his brow, the loose strands of his half-tied hair tumbling down and brushing over Shouta's face, but he only huffs a breath that completely fails to get them out of his face and bats gently at his husband's shoulder.

"It's on high heart, it'll catch on the bottom."

"Fuck!" The yelp is, frankly, adorable, and Shouta snickers to himself even as he turns back to his computer, saving and then closing all of the various documents he'd been working on. Zashi's right. His priority, right now, is to know what they're telling the class tomorrow, and to start arranging preliminary therapy sessions for all of them. Which means a lot of emails.

Well, at least having time off patrol for at least the majority of this week, if not longer, will give him some extra time on the lesson plans and their approvals from Nedzu.

At some point the shower switches off, followed not long later by the bathroom door opening, revealing a far more clean and relaxed-looking Problem Child, a towel over his head and looking more comfortable in a pair of loose shorts that may or may not be

remarkably similar to the colour of Shouta's goggles and a long-sleeved top not too dissimilar to Shouta's own. It's cute. *(Even with the sheathed knife that's tucked somewhat questionably in the waistband of said shorts.)*

"Is it alright that I put your capture weapon next to the laundry bin rather than in it?" He asks, shifting a towel from being draped over his head to around his shoulders instead, apparently ignorant of how the curls are threatening to drip still. Shouta resists the urge to roll his eyes over such a fact, even as he replies,

"That's better, thank you. It needs a special detergent."

"I thought it might," Izuku nods, and doesn't even hesitate to step over when Shouta raises his hands in tacit offer to finish drying his hair for him. The kid's doing a shoddy job of it as-is. When the hero starts scrunching the towel through the dripping curls, the teen hums, clearly musing, before speaking up again.

"It's a fabric-alloy, right? You said so on the eleventh." If both of them flinch slightly at that reminder *(a broken body amongst rubble, water falling like rain; the sickening give and blood-rush of their knife sinking in deep to a monster-)* then neither of them are going to acknowledge that right now, not when Izuku is still talking and there's the reassuring proximity and contact of the hero drying his hair,
"Presumably the balance and weaves of the fibres is pretty different to conventional clothing, or even to your hero uniform, so that, combined with the likelihood for it to get bodily or Quirk fluids and substances on it must mean that it has to have some pretty strong cleaning, but also something that won't affect the integrity of its make-up."

"All correct. How much do you know about chemical formulas?"

"Enough to know that you must have a special washing machine as well, or that you have access to some at UA or something because-"

"As genuinely interesting as this is to listen in to," Hizashi interrupts from across the kitchen counter, not unkind or even brisk but rather with a fond lilt, genuine,
"We've got dinner to eat, and Shou, you know the rules. Izuku, listener, we have a no-work rule for the dinner table. Other meals are

fair game, but we try to give our workaholic selves a break sometimes, ya dig?" The kid considers this for a moment, visibly turning it over in his head, before he turns around, pulling Shouta's towel-covered hands free of his hair with the movement.

"That's logical." There's a weight of amused accusation to it, but the hero only rolls his eyes.

"You're as much of a workaholic as we are, Problem Child."

"Takes one to know one." Shouta considers that for a long moment, head tilted and eyes hooded *(the silvery tint of his right eye is still somewhat startling after several days of seeing it-)* before shrugging,

"Fair. Dinner?"

"Dinner," Izuku agrees, and whilst the speed and tone-changes of their conversation doesn't take Hizashi aback, the slight shock he feels is somewhere along those lines. It's odd to see his Shou have such an easy rapport with someone else. Not bad, not by any stretch, but odd, particularly when he hasn't had the chance to develop that same rapport with the person.

He's going to though, so long as Izuku is willing, and, well, the kid definitely doesn't *dislike* him yet, so Hizashi daresays that he'll just have to continue as he's started and see where that gets them.

"I thought a stew would be light on your stomach, so I hope you enjoy!" he explains, pushing two bowls and some rice over the counter for Shouta to grab and put on the dining table. Izuku, taking the stew bowls, beams up at him,

"It smells great, Mic-sensei!"

Hizashi is already flapping his hands at Izuku, not dismissive or panicked but just a smaller version of all of his usual gestures,

"Woah, lil' one, none of that! Hizashi's about right for being at home, but Zashi or Yamada also work if you're more comfortable with them,

kay?"

"Oh," Izuku murmurs, staring over at him with wide, bright eyes and the dusting of a flush over his cheeks, curiously sunset-toned around and beneath the rose gold scars,
"Uhm, of course. Sorry Se- Hizashi-san."

"Good enough for me, lil' one," the blond offers, a sweet little smile in place as he reaches over, slow and careful, and hovers his hand near Izuku's head, clearly waiting for permission and awareness before he actually touches him, and that fact alone is enough for the teen to only pause briefly before listing forward in clear acceptance. The sensation of thin, cool fingers soothing against his scalp is different from the warm weight of Shouta's hand, but it's one that Izuku could get equally used to, he thinks. It's nice. More than.

(It, like several other things that he's already experienced tonight, feels like coming home. It's all the crisp wonder of night air and the clean smoothness of fresh sheets, the first snapping chill of winter frost and the first grass-bound starlight of spring dew. It's a deep breath of new air for iron-choked lungs, and Izuku couldn't be more grateful for it.)

Still though, they have hot food to eat before it cools. So Hizashi retracts his hand once Izuku has completely relaxed, and they all tactfully ignore the way that Izuku leans forward, subconsciously chasing the comfort of the affection, albeit the man reaches back again just enough to gently tug a curl before retreating completely.

They eat in quiet, contented chatter from there. Hizashi carries most of it, talking about heroes and professionals he's recently had or is soon to have for interviews or segments on the radio show. It's not a reminder of villains or school even whilst still being something that all three of them know about and can contribute towards, and this good choice of topic shows in how Izuku, over the course of the meal, begins to chip in more and more, adding little questions and comments and analyses to Hizashi's energetic spiels. Shouta is content to leave most of it to them. That being said, even he is comfortable enough with the pair of them and in how they're getting on to be able to make his usual sarcastic comments and questions about certain elements or heroes that intrigue him. Everything about the shared

meal is blanket-warm and oh-so precious.

It feels like family, in every possible and perfect way.

Of course, they finish eating sooner or later, and Shouta takes advantage of a lull in the conversation to usher the other two up and away from the table. Accordingly, with dinner done, and the dishes abandoned to their rarely-used dishwasher, the three retreat to the sofa.

Izuku, satiated and heart-full, hesitates at first but takes the third cushion quickly enough, given that it's been left empty from how Shouta takes the centre of the sofa, Hizashi grabbing his phone before settling to the shorter man's left, refraining from curling into Shouta or slinging an arm around his shoulders like he usually would in case it ends up encroaching on Izuku's space more than the kid would like. After all, just because he's been allowed some contact doesn't mean that Hizashi is willing to take liberties with that fact, particularly not now, when he's just starting to build trust with the kid and having to share a home together. If they're being the kid's safe space then the hero doesn't want to put that in jeopardy in any way, let alone just because his default is to be touchy-feely and affectionate. Izuku deserves better. No, he deserves the *best,* and Hizashi is determined to help give him exactly that.

Izuku is settling now though, sinking further back into his seat, shoulder to shoulder with Shouta, and only paying half-mind to the random history documentary the man is apparently settling on for the telly. For the first time in the last few days, he's actually sleepy. Not just tired, exhaustion laying thick and Atlas-weighted around his bones and heart and mind, but actually sleepy as well, full stomach and quiet noise and comforting presences all piling upon each other like a stack of blankets over him.

Given this, it's no surprise at all that Izuku ends up slumping further and further against his hero's shoulder, breaths slowing and deepening

the whole while. The two men exchange a few fond glances over it, but neither change anything or speak up. Why would they, when the sight is so cute and the kid clearly needs the rest either way?

Of course, sooner or later it's inevitable that Izuku slumps completely. Which, in and of itself, is fine, except he does so incredibly awkwardly, folding in on himself as best he can with legs already pulled up to his chest, slipping sideways so that his shoulders are at on odd angle, caught between Shouta's side and lap, one arm caught underneath himself, and one leg threatening to tip him off of the edge of the sofa entirely. All in all, it looks remarkably uncomfortable.

"Zashi-" His quiet panic has his husband grinning at him, teasing, even whilst Hizashi gets briefly out of his seat to help twist Izuku around enough for his mangled position to be more comfortable. If that also means that there's a head of fluffy green curls in Shouta's lap, the kid's nose pressing against his shirt, then so be it. The kid is even cuter when loosely curled up on his side, freckled hands tucked near an equally freckled chin, breathing steadily with his knees pressed against the back cushions of the sofa.

Shouta can't be blamed for letting Hizashi take at least a dozen pictures, and another half-dozen again when Optician leaps up to make a ball of fluff in the lee of the kid's knees.

[image]

There are so many things to deal with still. There's the reactions and explanations for the media and class and rest of the school, getting them both into therapy, helping Inko get sorted out to be able to help Izuku in the future, actually organising a proper room for Izuku here... The hero needs to address a few things about the kid's past too, because Bakugou and his Quirk are peculiar enough *(he hates the ever-more likely thought that Bakugou has at the very least been an occasional bully, if not constant, to his Problem Child, and he detests the awful bone-breaking nature of the kid's Quirk almost as much, regardless of the rapidly gained control Izuku has managed to accumulate-)*, and his seeming knowledge of All Might's small form needs discussing too. And if

Shouta also wants to get the kid his own knife and possibly capture weapon at some point down the line, then so be it.

None of that matters yet though. No, right now, he has his Sunshine beside him, warm and tender with an arm slung around Shouta's shoulders, and Izuku's head is pillowed in his lap, curls soft under the hero's touch, hot breaths seeping through Shouta's shirt to tickle uncomfortably against his stomach, except they're also precious, treasured.

It feels right, to be like this, here and now. He has both of his most precious people safe with him. Izuku is asleep, and he ate dinner, so maybe he still isn't okay, but he's already a little better than he was, and for now that's enough.

They didn't break, despite everything, and now they're starting to recover, their fractures and aches and chasms beginning to close up and bridge over with lace-delicate spiderwebs of healing. It's a start, and it's honestly more than they had even expected to be able to have *(when cycling endlessly in blood and bones and the shattering of bodies and hope, in mornings on rooftops followed by afternoons dying and fighting and saving and failing-)*. And Shouta couldn't be prouder of Izuku for it.

Chapter End Notes

CONFESSION - I'm gonna be writing a **LONGFIC FOR THIS.** It's arguably not a good idea to write more for this. But I really, really want to. The possible implications of this timeloop, how it could ripple-effect the entirety of the plot and also just how much I've genuinely loved writing this... I can't not at least try to continue writing for it - so, with that, I will be starting up a series for this fic (Counting The Days (Since We Refused To Break), find it below) and whenever I can write more for it, that's where you'll be able to find it! So if you'd be up for reading more, whenever "more" might be, go subscribe to that and I'll do my best!! (I have

started the first chapter, have some longer-term plot decided, and intend to update at least once a month, so-)

Oh, and when Shouta was watching Izuku and Hizashi, the daffodils were used to represent "unequalled love", tulips (yellow, in this case) for "sunshine in your smile" and finally sunflowers (dwarf ones, specifically) for "adoration". He loves his little family very much. (And, of course, they love him too.)

I can't believe this fic is done, from the monstrous OS it started as to this, but I've loved this so, so much, and thank you all for enjoying it too!! Your comments have been more than wonderful, and I appreciate every one of you!!
Tonnes of love, hugs and gratitude - Ota. Xxx

End Notes

I've realised that sometime down the road I'm hoping to end up adding a SECOND INSTALMENT for this, probably as a second chapter, where we can see some of their recovery, but for now this should work well as the originally-intended standalone! ^^;

Just because I didn't really have the time or opportunity to explain it in-fic: the time looping was the result of a Quirk from an unaffiliated villain - they joined the League's grunts on the premise of having a simple adrenaline-increasing Quirk that gives them a slight boost in a fight, an easy thing to fake should they have needed to. All of this just to be able to trap a few of UA in one of his loops, knowing that it will be bloody and traumatising, something that he can revel in, and that when they come out of the Quirk it will be *delightful* to witness. They chose Izuku and Aizawa because, in the original USJ loop, they were the two that ended up in the plaza alone and therefore easiest to use their Quirk on.
If you want to theorise/know any extra details on the Quirk, I do have some other notes so feel free to ask! ;)

Whew, now that I've lost three and a half days of my life to this fic, I feel safe to say that I really, really hope you all enjoyed it, particularly Alex!! Lemme know what you guys thought, yeh? Tonnes of hugs and gratitude, Ota. Xxx

PS: thanks to various people in Discord for putting up with me giving them angst and complaints ^^;

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!